



CLARA LEICESTER.

A NOVEL.

BY

CAPTAIN G. DE LA POER BERESFORD.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CLARA LEICESTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE COMFORTER AND THE COMFORTED.

THE vehement outcry of Lady Grace speedily brought Mrs. Ribble up stairs into Clara's room, where she found Grace sustaining, with difficulty, the almost insensible body of her cousin. The landlady, wondering at what she saw, soon placed the unhappy woman on the bed, loosed her dress, and was proceeding to chafe her hands, when Lady Grace interposed, saying she thought it would be best to leave

the sufferer awhile to herself, as, in all probability, the distress of Mrs. Sidney was more in mind than in body. Clara, therefore, reclined, without disturbance, in the hushed chamber.

After a time, during which she appeared to be in a state of utter unconsciousness, she opened her eyes and stared with a vacant expression like one awakening from a perplexed and melancholy dream ; but, on seeing her cousin bending over her, she became aware of the real circumstances by which she was surrounded. Her whole frame shuddered ; she hid her face with both hands, and burst into sobs.

“ The tears will do her good,” said Mrs. Ribble. “ After she has cried a bit, she’ll come to. Poor thing ! She has tried her strength too much in going and wandering about far and near, this morning.”

“ Wandering about !” echoed Lady Grace. “ I scarcely understand you. It is absolutely

necessary that I should know all. Pray explain yourself fully."

" Why," replied Mrs. Ribble, " she always takes and goes out in a morning after breakfast. Leastways, when she can get any breakfast; for sometimes I find she hasn't had none; but when this is the case, it's unbeknown to me at the time; else, to be sure, I should give her a morning's meal, and trust to her paying me when she could. Where she goes to, or what she hunts after, I'm sure I can't guess. But I'm of opinion to think—that is, I'm afeard—she has gone without vittals this blessed morning. She looks pale enough, I'm sure. For when a female hasn't had her meals reg'lar—"

Lady Grace, who did not desire to be edified by the landlady's dietetics, here stopped her loquacity by exclaiming,

" For heaven's sake, Mrs. Ribble, go down, and, with all possible speed, prepare some refreshment. I will pay you for it before I leave

the house ; and will also discharge whatever else may be owing to you by this poor lady."

Lady ! the term, this time, was understood in its integrity by Mrs. Ribble, whose curiosity was more and more piqued by the mystery which she hoped was now gradually unfolding itself. She had always perceived a difference in the language and bearing of the supposed Mrs. Sidney from those of any other lodger ever admitted into her house. Breeding cannot, under any circumstances, be thoroughly disguised. But Clara's evident poverty precluded the landlady from thinking much of what she had observed. In *her* eyes, refinement of manner was nothing without command of coin.

" Not a moment's time shall be lost, you may depend, ma'am," said Mrs. Ribble, in reply to the request of Lady Grace for refreshment.

So saying, Mrs. Ribble left the room.

This was a critical moment for Clara, who had now somewhat recovered from her first surprise and shock. To be left alone, under the present humiliating circumstances, with Grace, who had been the loving companion of her youth, when both were equally innocent and light-hearted, covered her with painful confusion. She dared not lift her eyes to her cousin's face, but turned away her head in shame and fear. She felt that the present unexpected interview was the terrible contact of frailty with virtue—the trembling offender before the judge—guilt dreading a stern sentence. How was she to endure her cousin's rebuke? How meet her gaze?

But her fears were vain. Grace came there to succour, not to reprove. Was not the erring one already punished? And were not other sufferings yet in store for her, from which she could not possibly escape? To “heap more coals of fire upon her head,” would be unchristian.

A limit, which should never be violated, is interposed between just indignation and offence, when the offender has already undergone the torturing purgatory through which sin must always pass. Had Lady Grace, (who saw before her a wretched woman writhing under the results of her lapse from virtue), uttered any taunts against her, it might be questioned whether such hardness of heart would not be more deplorable than the previous conduct of the transgressor.

Nothing, however, was farther than this from the mind of Grace, who remembered the divine parable of The Prodigal Son, wherein the dissolute, but then repentant, young man is received by his father, not with reproaches and condemnation, but with embraces and kisses, and a joyful feast. Grace humbly resolved that, as far as she was capable, she would obey the teaching of that heavenly story. She thought not even of the wrong which Clara

had inflicted on her with regard to Tresham. In this, she believed Clara was unconscious that she was injuring her. She felt, however, no toleration for the betrayer of the affections of both. He remained obdurate and unabashed. To him, the severity of indignation, as a punishment of his treachery, was due. He had not repented. Why, therefore, should he be spared?

“Dear Clara,” said Grace, in her soft, sweet voice, “calm yourself, I pray you. You know not how your friends have missed you.”

These words fell like balm on Clara’s ears. But she thought she did not deserve them, and the thought agitated her. She raised her haggard face; and, in tones shaken by long suffering and present emotion, exclaimed—

“Friends! I believed I had not one friend in the wide world.”

“What!” rejoined her cousin; “and your own Grace living!”

“ Were she to know all,” replied Clara, “ she would despise and loath me.”

“ No, no,” returned Grace, “ she would only see more cause to comfort you.”

“ Blessings on you!” ejaculated the forlorn woman. “ Your appearance here amazes me the more because, if you remember, you refused a short time ago, and when I was in a better home, to call on me, even though I passionately implored you to do so.”

“ Yes,” rejoined Grace. “ At that time, as I believed, you were in no want of the comforts included in a good residence, and as I felt that my interposition was not necessary, I did not—I could not—yield to your request. Pray, dear Clara, spare me the pain of any other justification of my refusal.”

“ I see it all,” returned Clara. “ You come now, regardless of unworthy interpretations, because I am destitute. But,” pursued she, “ are you not disgusted—are you not horrified

—to find one of *your* relatives inhabiting this miserable garret, where she seeks to shun the scorn of the world? I am often without food; always without change of raiment; but never without shame. My fellow-lodgers, though very humble, are happy and content. But they look down on *me* with mortifying pity. I am the only wretched creature in the house."

And she again burst into an hysterical passion of tears.

Fearing that Clara's uncontrollable agitation might, in part, be the effect of exhaustion arising from want of nourishment, Grace went to the door, and saying, "I shall be back again in a moment," ran down to expedite the meal which Mrs. Ribble had undertaken to prepare. On the last flight of stairs she met the landlady bearing a tray.

"Quick! quick!" ejaculated Grace. "I fear she is fainting again."

Mrs. Ribble made no reply; but hastened

upwards, and she and Lady Grace entered Clara's room together, and found her pacing to and fro like one distracted.

"Look, dear Clara," said Grace, "Mrs. Ribble has brought some refreshment. Sit down and eat. See—here are coffee, eggs, rolls, and a slice of ham." Then taking up a small bottle, and turning to the landlady, she said, "What is this, Mrs. Ribble?"

"Only a little drop of brandy, ma'am," replied the woman. "Ah, bless your hearts, I know what is best for females in these quandaries. I feels 'em myself sometimes, and then I generally swallows a little brandy, though it always goes agin me. But I understand what is good for my sect. When women is qualmish and what the doctors call historical, there is nothing half so comforting for 'em as a sup of brandy. And sure I am that Mrs. Sidney *is* historical; leastways, she *was* historical a few minutes ago."

Disturbed and shocked as she was, Lady Grace could not refrain from smiling at Mrs. Ribble's eloquence ; though, considering the present extremity, she was inclined to concur in the landlady's prescription. Therefore, taking up a wine-glass which had been placed on the tray, and half-filling it with water, she added a small portion of the spirit to it, and, after much persuasion, succeeded in prevailing on Clara to swallow the mixture. Then, with exquisite address, and hoping to induce her to eat, she said—

“ I declare I have been from home so long this morning as to have missed luncheon ; so, dear Clara, I will take some coffee and ham with you.”

“ Oh, Lady Grace !” ejaculated Clara, in a tone of incredulity, and with a melancholy smile.

“ I assure you I mean what I say,” responded Grace, drawing a chair to the table. “ I protest Mrs. Ribble has made the tray quite tempting.”

Mrs. Ribble's tongue—which had been irksomely imprisoned by the necessity of not seeming to know the rank of her visitor lest she might compromise the footman—was now released by the words of her lodger, who had addressed the stranger as “Lady Grace.”

“I humbly thank your ladyship,” said she, with a movement of her figure as if she were going to sit down, but which was intended for what she called ‘making her obedience,’—“I humbly thank your ladyship for pleasing to be pleased with what I’ve done. Lord bless us! I can always tell real ladies from them as only makes believe to be as such. *My* eyes don’t take long a ’opening. And I’m proud to think that the tray turned out well to satisfaction, and that you, my lady, approves. What I’ve brought up is clean and wholesome, I hope. Leastways, I strived and strained as much as ever I cou’d to have it all nice and proper, considering as how I had next to no time to do it in.”

“ You have done very well, Mrs. Ribble,” observed Lady Grace, with difficulty keeping her countenance.

“ Your ladyship is very good to say so,” returned the landlady as she left the room with a profound sinking of her frame by way of curtsey. “ Don’t mind calling over the stairs, my lady, if you wants me for anything in regard of Mrs. Sidney, poor dear !”

When the cousins were left to themselves, Lady Grace said—

“ Now, my dear, let you and I take some refreshment together. We have often done so before.”

And as she spoke, she helped Clara to a portion of what was on the table, and took some of it herself, merely to encourage her unhappy companion. Little, however, of Mrs. Ribble’s banquet was consumed by the ladies, both of whom were too much distressed to eat. Still Clara seemed benefited by even that little.

“It is very, very kind of you, Lady Grace, to come to see me in my wretchedness,” said Clara, gazing with melancholy eyes into her cousin’s countenance.

“Do not, I pray you, call me *Lady Grace*,” returned the affectionate visitor; “such a ceremonious manner is painfully cold and precise.”

“If it is your wish that I should continue to address you as formerly, I will do so,” replied Clara. “But,” added she with tears, “consider my fearful humiliation. An impassable gulf is now between us—between *my* disgrace and *your* unsullied honour.”

“No, no,” responded Grace; “no gulf can separate you and me.” Then extending her arms, she exclaimed, “See, dear Clara, how easily you can be pressed to my heart. Come!”

Thus re-assured by this noble-minded woman, whose religion was the religion of the heart as taught by the Great Founder of our faith, Clara arose and fell on the neck of her cousin, who

folded her to her bosom, calmed her sobs, and kissed away her tears.

The incorruptible rectitude of Lady Grace's principles was perfectly consistent with pity for, and charity towards, any frailty, when atoned by contrition. And her sagacity clearly saw that, in Clara's case, the repentance was sincere and beyond the chance of relapse into sin. To relieve her cousin's misery merely by money—though the necessity for that was not forgotten—would have been insufficient. The lowest form of charity, as Saint Paul teaches us, is the giving of alms. “Though,” says the Apostle, “I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not *charity*, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is *kind*; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, &c.”

Grace bore this in reverential memory; and

she felt that any manifestation of superiority—even the superiority of a well-conducted life—would have been incompatible with the supplication in which she joined on every day of worship, “to bring into the way of truth all such as have erred and are deceived; to comfort and help the weak-hearted; and to raise up them that fall.” Therefore, she poured the balm of tender words into her cousin’s wounds.

CHAPTER II.

GENEROSITY OF GRACE—MRS. RIBBLE'S OPINION
AS TO FEMININE SYMMETRY, AND HER THEORY
RESPECTING DIET FOR FEMALES.

THE throbings of surprise and shame felt by Clara on first seeing Lady Grace, were now lulled, leaving her sufficiently calm to wonder how her cousin could have traced her to so obscure a place, and what could have occasioned the visit.

“ Your presence here, dear Grace,” said Clara,

“is a mystery. Through whom did you discover my hiding-place? What motive has induced you to penetrate so wretched a neighbourhood as this?”

“To your first question,” responded Grace, “you must not be offended, dear Clara, if I decline at present to give an answer. You next ask, what is my motive in visiting you? Be assured it is a simple one, quite untainted with idle curiosity. The fact is, I heard you were not happy, and therefore I came at once to see how I could serve you. Speak openly. Command my willing aid to effect whatever you may think best to be done. Tell me your plans.”

“Plans!” echoed Clara; “alas! what plans can those who are starving form? Under my present circumstances, the attainment of food is a difficulty of so mighty a kind as to render other considerations insignificant. Never, dear Grace, till lately, did I understand and feel the full force and significance of the thrice-hallowed words,

‘ Give us this day our daily bread.’ I now know with what torturing vehemence that petition may be preferred.”

And she covered her face with her hands, while her frame shook, as a remembrance of all she had suffered passed across her mind. Lady Grace did not speak: she thought it best to let the agitation pass away without interference.

At length, having in some measure recovered herself, Clara spoke again, saying—

“ Listen, dear Grace ! I have just returned from seeking work, and everywhere have been refused employment. The shop-keepers think I do not possess the look of a practised seamstress. In fact, they tell me so. I am haunted by perpetual mortification and repulse wherever I go ; and I returned here this noon to rest my weary limbs, and, if possible, get a little food.”

“ You must no more suffer such extremities,” said Lady Grace, deeply moved by what she had just heard ; “ and it shall be my duty to

place you beyond their influence. We may both be happy once more, dear Clara. You shake your head as if to signify that you put no trust in hope. This is not wise. Hope blesses *itself*. It enhances the pleasure and diminishes the evil of life. It has been called the ‘captive’s freedom, and the sick man’s health ; the riches of the beggar ; the first fruits of joy ; the gentle dawning of a bright success ; a blessing still in hand beyond the reach of fortune.’ Without hope, the world would be universal wretchedness. Look up, beloved cousin, and welcome hope.”

Clara lifted her eyes, and taking her relative’s hand, kissed it as a token that she felt the comfort of her words.

“ Meanwhile,” resumed Lady Grace, “ there is one necessity which must be immediately administered to. You must have funds to go on with ; and I come prepared to make efficient arrangements in this respect. But first of all,

would you not like to leave this house and take better lodgings ?”

Clara mused deeply awhile, and then replied—

“No ; I think, for the present at least, I had better remain here. As *you* have visited me, I can safely reckon on the good offices of the landlady ; though, to do her justice, she has never been actually unkind. Her occasionally saucy and defiant manner arises more from temper than from heart. The concealment of this place is soothing to me ; and though *you* (urged by unfailing love) have found me out—how I know not—I doubt if others will take the pains requisite to do so. On my return from Spain, my father wished me to go home with him, but I refused ; for it is of vital importance that I should remain some time to come in absolute obscurity.”

Grace thought she understood her cousin’s meaning ; but she made no comment, leaving

Clara to deduce from her silence that she acquiesced in her views. At length she said, placing a purse in her hands—

“ Here, dearest, are twenty guineas for present purposes. You had better engage the next room, if possible, in addition to this, and furnish it. You will thus be more to yourself. I must, if you please, be permitted to settle all the claims your landlady may have against you. Further, dear Clara, I shall lodge with my London bankers an authority to honour your cheques to the amount of eighty guineas on my account, in such time and manner as you may think fit; and when that sum shall be exhausted, I will renew the letter of credit on your behalf.”

“ Kind, generous Grace!” exclaimed Clara: “ how shall I find words to thank you?”

“ I do not need them,” replied Lady Grace. “ After all,” added she, with a smile, “ perhaps I am only administering to my own gratifica-

tion and self-complacency while endeavouring to make *you* happy. But we must now talk of practical matters. It will be necessary that you go with me to the bankers in order to give them your signature, by which they can test the authenticity of whatever cheques you may draw."

On hearing this, Clara looked somewhat disquieted.

"*Must* I go with you? and now?" interrogated she, in faltering accents.

"Yes, my dear," answered Grace; "it is indispensable. We had better go to-day, for my engagements will hinder me to-morrow. What cause is there for hesitation?"

"It is not easy for me to state the cause," replied Clara, with a slight glance at her dress.

Grace understood her.

"Have you no other?" asked she.

"I said just now," returned Clara, "that I had no change of clothes."

“True, I forgot,” rejoined Grace. “On second thought, I find the day after to-morrow will do. You and I, dear Clara, when we were girls, have often worn each other’s clothes. Let us do so again. This evening a parcel shall be sent to you. In it will be found whatever may be requisite for your visit with me to the banking-house. I will wait in my carriage for you in Regent Street, just opposite Great Marlborough Street, at two o’clock, when we can go together to Charing Cross. And now, dear Clara, good-by, and let me implore you to keep up your spirits.”

A faint smile passed over Clara’s face, and the cousins separated.

Lady Grace’s kind agency was not yet over. She had something still to arrange with the landlady, whom she saw, on descending the stairs, standing at the parlour-door. Mrs. Ribble now dropped one of her most reverential “obediences” to Lady Grace, who, saying she de-

sired to settle a few matters with her, was asked into the parlour.

“ I wish, Mrs. Ribble,” said her Ladyship, “ to make one or two arrangements before I go ; and, in the first place, to discharge any claims you may have upon Mrs. Sidney.”

“ Very true, my Lady,” observed Mrs. Ribble, not knowing exactly at the moment how to express herself in reply. After a brief cogitation, she addressed her mind to the business in hand, saying,—

“ There’s two weeks’ rent, at two shillings and ninepence a week. But p’raps, my Lady, your Ladyship would like to have Mrs. Sidney down, just in regard of my voracity ; for, to be sure, I may say what isn’t correct, though I never did such a thing in all my born days—leastways, if I know’d it. But then, how is your Ladyship to feel sure as I ain’t saying what it isn’t true ? People does it very often in this world ; though, to be sure——”

“I am quite satisfied of your honesty, Mrs. Ribble,” interrupted Lady Grace; “so just put down on a piece of paper the particulars and amount of your claim, and I will discharge it before we speak of other matters.”

“Why, you see, my Lady,” returned Mrs. Ribble, “I ain’t no scholard; by reason of which I never writes nothing; but gets my neighbour, Mrs. Watkinson—her as keeps a day-school for little boys and girls in the two-pair next door but one—to draw out all my little bills. Shall I send in for her, my Lady?”

“There is not the slightest occasion to trouble your neighbour,” replied Lady Grace. “If you will mention the heads of what is due, I will write them down and pay the total amount.”

This was soon done, to the excessive delight of Mrs. Ribble, who vented her thanks by all manner of superlatives in her own peculiar English.

“One thing more,” said Lady Grace. “I wish you always to have a little fund in hand wherewith to procure a few comforts for Mrs. Sidney, so as to be ready for her on her return to her room. I mean, that I should be pleased if she were to find her meals ready without waiting for them. A little dinner, you know, can easily be kept hot; and, as for the rest, such as breakfast and tea, they are simple enough. Now, I do not expect you to take all this trouble without being paid, and I will see that you are so. Mrs. Sidney is likely to remain here some time to come. At present, I place in your hands five guineas to be laid out in whatever may be required, and to satisfy you for your labour in attending to Mrs. Sidney. When this slight advance shall be spent, I will supply more.”

“Ten thousand thanks, my Lady, for your Ladyship’s great goodness,” ejaculated Mrs. Ribble. “Not a farden of the money shall be

wasted, neither in regard of what I lays out of it for Mrs. Sidney, poor dear ! nor in regard of my own trouble and work in cooking, cleaning, waiting on her, and that. She mustn't get faint no more, nor ever be historical agen, leastways if I can help it ; for I'm of opinion to think that no female woman ever is historical as has her meals reg'lar five times a day. Mind you, my Lady, that is, provided she always has meat every time and a little something good to drink with it, which I particular recommend to my own sect, for, to be sure, we're poor, weak, delicate creatures, and want more support than the he-fellows."

Lady Grace, afraid of laughing lest she might abate the landlady's enthusiasm on behalf of Clara, rose to depart, and left the house, Mrs. Ribble having strained the muscles of her legs in a desperate endeavour to be deliberate and respectful in her curtseys. A slow and well-sustained movement is the only way of exhibit-

ing this particular kind of homage, and so Mrs. Ribble evidently thought. But while performing, in a kind of adagio, one of her acts of reverence, she was thrown so much from her centre as to be in danger of a heavy collision with the floor. Happily, however, she recovered herself in time, on which the floor might be congratulated.

Followed by the footman, Lady Grace quickly reached Regent Street, and getting into her carriage, was driven home.

No sooner had Lady Grace disappeared, than Mrs. Ribble rushed up to Clara's room, exclaiming—

“ Oh, Mrs. Sidney ! I’m of opinion to think that Lady Grace must be a real angel dropped from the sky, and no ‘ooman at all, she is dressed so beautiful and fashionable, and is so genteel, and kind, and free-spoken. Not a bit of pride. Then her cemetery ! I never see such in all my life ! for my maxim is, if a

female is ever so handsome in the face, it goes for a'most nothing, if she hasn't got a good shape and make. And, to be sure, the cemetery of our sect is the point which it is what the t'other sect principal looks after. And so do we females ourselves, for the matter o' that; else we shouldn't tug, and torture, and grip ourselves in as we do with lacing. Ah! many of us a'most stops their breathing for nothing but cemetery. It's unbeknown what they undergoes to show their shapes. Not that I myself do it, except in the morning, when, in course, I tightens myself to keep up my figure. But then, mind you, I always lets myself out every day after dinner, 'cause as I'm hearty at meals and never goes a walking in the afternoon to show myself to male beholders, but takes a nap—cemetery is no object then. Oh! how I should like to see her Ladyship when she is out of mourning, and in bright silks and satins! Wouldn't that set off her shape?"

Having thus vented her notions concerning female symmetry, it suddenly occurred to Mrs. Ribble that, instead of preaching, she ought to be thinking of Mrs. Sidney's dinner, in conformity with the injunctions of Lady Grace. Being thus self-admonished, she said—

“ What would you like to have for dinner to-day, ma'am ? If you'll let *me* pass an opinion, I should say a chicken nicely roasted and a bit of pickled pork cut out of the prime and biled. There's a beautiful pork-butcher round the corner. And while that's a cooking, p'raps you'd like a morsel o' lunch : you *must* want something by this time ; for it's full two hours this blessed morning since you had your breakfast ; and females is obligated to keep themselves up. Not that we're fond of eating, by no means ; but we *must* take nourishment for the sake of our health and bloom. What do you say to a small rumpsteak, done lovely with ketchup and some mashed 'tatoe, by way of lunch,

and a glass of port-wine, which it is very good at ‘The Mitre?’ ”

Poor, sad, discarded, heart-broken Clara ! These coarse suggestions about eating and drinking were not in accordance with the melancholy state of her mind, haunted as it was by memories of her ill-starred marriage, her tour in Spain, her connection with Tresham, and his villainous conduct towards her. Mrs. Ribble’s gluttonous discourse was abhorrent ; but as she believed the woman meant well, she meekly replied—

“ Thank you, Mrs. Ribble. I do not need any luncheon whatever ; and, as respects dinner, I have no preference for anything. So pray get what is most convenient to you.”

“ Very well, ma’am,” answered the landlady, not a little pleased to have the catering department under her exclusive control ; for being resolved that every meal should be abundantly sufficient for two, she exulted that the choice

of fare was confided without restriction to herself.

At first, Clara was astounded at the newly-born solicitude of the landlady on her behalf; though, as she could attribute it to nothing else than the watchful and affectionate ministry of Lady Grace, she did not ask for explanation.

The landlady having left the room, Clara resigned herself to a dreary retrospect of her past life, and to a wondering ruminations on the almost mysterious visit of her cousin.

CHAPTER III.

A BRAWL IN THE COTTAGE AT KEW.

CONSIDERED with reference to any immediate emancipation from his galling necessities, Tre-sham's interview with Lady Grace, as described towards the end of the first volume, was not altogether satisfactory : it afforded only a faint hope. At first, indeed, his egregious vanity flattered him into a belief that her promise to see him once more might warrant his anticipation of her ultimate pardon and final acceptance

of his hand. But when cooler thoughts reminded him of the look which accompanied her words, on saying, “I may, perhaps, have occasion to request you to renew your visit,” his confidence faltered, and he was by no means sure that something adverse was not implied.

He therefore returned to his cottage at Kew, vexed, dispirited, and “out of sorts” with others and himself. He began to fear that his pecuniary difficulties were insurmountable. He felt that some decisive step must be taken in his present emergency. His expenses at Kew could no longer be met, and further credit was hopeless. But how should he get rid of the lady whom he had domiciliated there?

Lord Sidney Tresham was very versatile in his attachments, and exceedingly ingenious in bringing about a quarrel with any woman of whose society he might grow tired. This was now the case with the lady just mentioned, who was not, as rumour had declared, a foreign

actress, but an English Columbine, whose real patronymic was Jobbings. Her Christian name was Priscilla, a name which her parents might not have chosen for her had they known, that in its original Latin, it means “a little *ancient*.”

Having a natural aptitude for dancing, Miss Jobbings was educated with a view to the profession of that art ; but as her ambition pointed to the stage, she procured an engagement, first, as one of the ballet girls of the * * * theatre, and soon afterwards as Columbine in a Christmas pantomime. Now, as it would never do for the play-bills to assign the personation of such an important heroine as this to a lady bearing the name of Jobbings, our *danseuse* assumed the more euphonious appellative of Mademoiselle Priscille, by which denomination she was soon known in private life as well as in public. A comely woman was Priscille ; she possessed a figure of which the outline might have won

approbation even from the fastidious Mrs. Ribble, had that excellent landlady been so fortunate as to see the Columbine. Tresham, for a time, was captivated by it.

But at length he grew weary of her charms, especially as they were combined with a fierce temper and a taunting style of language. Tresham was still further incited to come to a misunderstanding with his fair friend by a run of ill-luck at the gaming-table. It therefore became imperatively necessary that he should cut down his expenses ; for his losses rendered him almost penniless and dependent on his wits for subsistence. He could, besides, no longer show his face in the gambling-club of which he was a member — his present poverty being known to the frequenters of that iniquitous place, where he was proscribed as one who did not always pay his debts of honour. He had, moreover, exhausted the patience of his relations by his frequent request of loans.

What should he do ? His situation was desperate. His funds were at their lowest ebb, and his character was gone. Nothing but an union with Lady Grace could save him ; and of this there seemed but a feeble chance. Still, whatever her ambiguous promise might portend as a future contingency, it was clear that he could no longer keep the cottage where Priscille resided, neither could he discharge the debts he had contracted in the neighbourhood. Flight alone remained for him ; though he thought it not quite politic to leave his fair companion without some intimation of his approaching absence, and, if requisite, of the financial extremity in which he was involved.

Accordingly the morning after his inauspicious visit to Lady Grace, he told Priscille she had better, for a brief interval, seek some other home, as he was compelled to visit the Continent. He would return to her as soon as he should come

back to England. But his affairs peremptorily called him abroad.

“What then?” demanded Priscille. “Cannot I go with you?”

“Impossible!” replied Tresham. “I shall not be able to remain long in any place. My travels might extend beyond Europe. I have property in the West Indies. You would not, surely desire to go there, and lose your life.”

“Excuse me, my lord,” rejoined Priscille; “but I do not believe one word you say. I am not ignorant of your fickle, and, let me add, perfidious disposition. It grieves me to say that during the last week or two, I have had reason to suspect that you meant to play me false. You will not, however, find me as patient as others have been. I have a spirit above it. I know something of your ‘antecedents,’ as they say of culprits.”

Lord Sidney Tresham, with a furious gesture, started at his companion’s audacity.

“Nay, my lord,” said Priscille, tauntingly, “do not waste your rage. Nurse it for some one else. It will be thrown away on me.” Then, in a loud and angry tone, she exclaimed, “Speak, Tresham! speak the truth, if you have not forgotten what truth is! Answer me one question. Do you mean to desert me in this sneaking, pitiful and base manner, and with a lie in your mouth?”

“Bravo, madam!” coolly replied Tresham, clapping his hands. “I perceive that your practice on the boards has not been barren of results. You appear to have studied other characters than that of the chaste and delicate Columbine who elopes with a motley hero and dances hornpipes in front of pantomime shops in stage streets. Why do you not undertake some of the bullying women in the old comedies? They would be worthy your ambition, and you would act them to the life. Refer the

manager to me for a testimony of your qualifications."

"I despise your insolence," retorted the lady. "Were your lordship a gentleman in addition to your being a nobleman (by courtesy), you would not behave in this low and paltry manner, and add insult to injury. The stage could teach you many a good and useful lesson. Knaves are never permitted to thrive in dramas. You have grossly deceived, and evidently mean to abandon, one who has been faithful to you, and who has relinquished her honourable profession in a reliance on your promise to make her your wife. I cannot return to the stage, because it has gone abroad that I was about to become Lady Tresham. Therefore do me justice, or I will see if the law cannot redress my wrongs. If you are incapable of behaving like a man of honour—as I have lately had reason to suspect—you shall pay for your villainy. Do you suppose I will consent to be the victim of your

perfidy? No! You shall find that I have courage to take my own part, even if I ruin you and myself."

"Gently, madam, gently," returned Tresham, with perfect self-composure. "Consider, before you go to law, how your expenses are to be paid. The money I possessed last week is all lost. At this present moment I am not worth a shilling. Thank your stars that you are not my wife, and transfer your smiles and your sweet temper to some man more able to pay for them. That is my advice as your friend. But do as you like. I care not."

This bravado was assumed in the hope of inducing Priscille to desist from her purpose of going to law. Were she to prosecute it, he knew full well that she could gain nothing; but he also knew that the publicity which would be given to his conduct, must infallibly destroy his last chance with Lady Grace, (for he foolishly buoyed himself up with a hope that he still had one). He

vainly relied on what her ladyship had said at the termination of the last interview ; and, in spite of all that had resulted from his acquaintance with Mrs. Leicester, he imagined he might still win Lady Grace and her large fortune.

“ Am I not,” ruminated he, “ an irresistible lady-killer ? And ought I to despair of regaining the love of the handsomest woman of the day, who is also the richest ? I must, however, get rid of this Columbine ; and I know no better way than by terrifying her. This, it seems, is not very easy. Why is it so often my fate to meet with women of invincible spirit ? My present companion, with whom I only thought to amuse myself, is a thorough vixen ; and Grace Dalzell, it seems, will not tamely submit to be trifled with. Still, she has promised me another meeting. After all, poor Clara is the only meek and trusting soul I have ever known. But she has no money ; else perhaps——”

Tresham’s reverie was now disturbed by Pris-

cille, who said, “I am glad to perceive you are thinking a second time of what you have threatened regarding me. If you will not do me justice, and should the law fail me, I am determined to proclaim my wrongs to the world ; and, in doing so, I shall reveal a few facts concerning you and your gambling deeds, which must for ever destroy your character, not only as a man of honour, but as a man of common honesty. You shall bear upon you the brand of a swindler. I know a few of the incidents of your life, and others shall know them too.”

“ If what you say has any foundation in truth,” retorted Tresham, “ what will be thought of you, who, for the sake of an empty title, tried, might and main, to ally yourself with a swindler ? Who would suffer most from what you threaten, you or me ?”

Priscille was dumb : she could not answer this plain question, and Tresham rejoiced at her defeat.

“I care not,” pursued he, following up his advantage, “what you may preposterously *think* you know. My honour is far above the reach of a pantomime dancer, prodigal in display of leg, and a mere simpering accomplice in the vulgar tricks of harlequin and clown. Do your best or your worst, you shall not metamorphose me, nor shake my resolve.”

“Then, Lord Sidney Tresham,” retorted she, “you shall find me a thorn in your path. Farewell.”

Tresham, who, up to this time, had preserved his equanimity, was now stung to the quick. It would be no inappropriate metaphor to say that his fury was red hot, and that the language in which he answered Priscille was not less fiery.

“Go, madam,” said he, in a tone of uncontrollable exasperation, “go; but it shall be at your peril if you ever again show your face in this house. You have, yourself, by the audacity

of your insolence, absolved me from any care of you. Because, until now, I have treated you with the deference due to your sex, do you presume to think I will tamely bear the complication of insults with which you have just assailed me? I confided to you my present distress; hinted that it would be only temporary; and promised to rejoin you on my return from abroad, whither I go to procure funds. And how," pursued he, in a voice becoming more stormy every instant, "has this confidence and friendship been met? Instead of womanly solace and sympathy—seldom wanting when a man is in difficulties—you have called me a liar; compared my *antecedents* with those of culprits; told me I am not a gentleman, but a knave; and threatened to expose me as a swindler. By the heavens above us, if you ever dare to present yourself at this door again, you shall be expelled with ignominy; and your character as a woman of mercenary intrigue shall be pro-

claimed throughout the neighbourhood. Your clothes and other things I will send after you to any place you may specify. But again, I say, beware how you show your face at this dwelling. The servants shall be ordered to spurn you, like a beggar, from a place where my folly has hitherto permitted you to preside as mistress. Go ; and may your steps be dogged by self-contempt, and the hissing sneers of others.”

Priscille writhed under these fierce maledictions. But feeling it was too late for remonstrance, or for any attempt at pacification, she went to her room in a great tremor, hastily put on her bonnet and shawl, and sallied forth, bursting with vexation and rage. She felt she had overshot her mark, and she cursed her own precipitancy no less than his rage. Her mind surged under the vehemence of her passion. For some time she could not command one distinct idea, nor consider what had best be done at the present unanticipated juncture.

At length, however, her agitation was sufficiently lulled to enable her to take counsel with herself ; and the first distinct thought was accompanied by a fear that the jewels she had left behind her in Tresham's cottage were not exactly safe. His lordship's necessities were tormenting, and she knew that his principles could not lay claim to heroism. True, she had hidden the casket which contained her glittering decorations ; but then she imagined that Tresham's desperate circumstances might sharpen his natural cunning, so as to guide him to her *cache*. Her trinkets were her best friends— aids that would set off her beauty so as to win a new lover—or, in default of that, would provide her with subsistence during a fallow season. Why had she not secured her treasure before she left the house ? She could only account for such an oversight by the scaring effect which Tresham's denunciation had wrought on her.

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed she to herself, “ how fool-

ish it is to fall into a flutter and so lose one's presence of mind! To go back to the house will never do. A *scene* might then occur, in which it would be madness for *me* to perform. Yet some attempt must be made to recover my jewels. But how?"

CHAPTER IV.

PRISCILLE'S JEWELS—AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR
—TRICK UPON TRICK.

NOT knowing how to act, and having no friend to advise her, Priscille walked on without purpose. While crossing Kew Green, she met Tresham's man-servant, to whom she related what passed between her and his master, not omitting a recital of his lordship's ungovernable rage, delivered by her with genuine stage emphasis. Being glad of any ear into which she could pour a statement of her wrongs, and—in her peculiar position—having no power to form

acquaintance with any of her own sex in the neighbourhood, she was reduced to the necessity of taking into her confidence a menial of the opposite sex, to whom she communicated that Tresham had declared he was not worth a shilling. To this she added her belief, that his lordship would probably leave the man without his wages.

“ Ah, he’s a bad one,” said Thomas. “ I’ve long suspected it, and been prepared for a shabby trick. But what can we do? law is no use against a beggar. I knew something was in the wind, by what I’ve heard from one or two of his companions’ valets. He has been turned out of several houses where they play deep, and where he is over head and ears in debt. My notion is he’ll be off directly, and I should advise you, ma’am, to get out of the way at once, or else the landlord may detain some of your valuables for the rent, and so put you to a good deal of trouble to get them back.”

“ What am I to do, then, about my wardrobe and trinkets ? How can *they* be secured ? ” asked Priscille.

“ I’m a man of few words,” replied Thomas. “ I sha’n’t get my wages—that’s pretty certain. Now, if you’ll pay me for my trouble, I’ll manage so as to save your things for you out of harm’s way. There may be a little danger in the job. But we must act this very morning, afore master’s plan of being off is suspected in the neighbourhood.”

“ Why, to tell you the truth, Thomas,” rejoined the lady, “ I am not at all rich, for Tresham has been very shabby. I’ve no other money than what I have saved from my theatrical engagements.”

“ But consider your jewels, ma’am,” urged Thomas.

“ True,” said Priscille. “ Those, indeed, or the principal part of them, are presents from his lordship, or rather contributions from the un-

suspecting jewellers from whom he obtained them ; for not one farthing of their money will they ever see. They are, however, of great importance to me, and must, if possible, be secured.”

“ Very well,” replied Thomas ; “ if you’ll give me five guineas, you shall have everything safe and sound.”

“ Done !” rejoined the lady, in true theatrical style.

“ Honour ?” said Thomas, interrogatively.

“ Honour !” assented Priscille ; and the bargain was struck.

“ But, Thomas,” pursued the lady, “ you must have a female with you on account of my dresses, which should be properly folded for removal, otherwise they may be spoiled.”

“ I’m thinking, ma’am,” said Thomas, “ of your laundress and her daughter. I know them to be trustworthy.”

“ Nothing can be better,” rejoined Priscille.

“Should they be successful in getting my property out of danger, I shall certainly not forget their services.”

“So far, so good,” observed Thomas.

“You must now tell me exactly where we are to look for your moveables.”

“Why,” returned the Columbine, “my wardrobe will, of course, be found in the drawers of my room. Here is a key which opens them all.”

“But the jewels, ma’am?” interrogated Thomas.

“Ah, that is, indeed, a secret,” returned Priscille. “The fact is, I have some little time imagined that his Lordship might find it convenient to possess those valuables, which consist not only of the ornaments he gave me on our first acquaintance, but of several others which I already possessed. Now, with a design to frustrate this amiable intention on his part, I have hidden the case containing my treasure in such

a manner as, I trust, will foil him. In *your* honesty, Thomas, I fully confide, and will, therefore, reveal to you the place of concealment."

"Why, ma'am, unless you do so," observed the man, with a smile, "my attempt to serve you is likely to end in nothing."

"Listen, then," rejoined Priscille ; "the mattrasses and bed are supported on a thick straw paliasse. Look at this just beneath the pillow, where you will find that the casing is ripped ; and if you lift this casing and draw aside some of the straw, a good-sized morocco casket will be visible."

"Enough," returned Thomas. "Pray Jupiter master hasn't already found out where the jewels are lurking ! Ah ! he's a knowing one. Not a moment is to be lost. I will do whatever I can. It is your only chance ; for any return to the house by you is out of the question, especially after the quarrel you have had

with master. He'll be off to-night, I'm pretty certain."

"Be quick, then," said Priscille; "I had better go with you to the house of the laundress, and wait there till you return."

The confederates now walked to the woman's hut; and she, on hearing a statement of what Priscille feared, backed by tempting promises for her assistance, consented to aid in the enterprise. Accordingly, Thomas, the woman, and her daughter, each of the latter taking clothes-bags with them, started for Tresham's cottage.

On arriving at the house, the females were deposited in the kitchen under pretence of waiting for the week's linen; and Thomas, screwing up his courage, mounted the stairs boldly, and entered Priscille's room, situated at the back of the house.

But what was his dismay on finding Tresham there? Turning quickly upon the man, his lordship sternly demanded what he did there, and

how he dared intrude into a lady's room without even the usual preliminary of knocking. Thomas, in spite of the character he had assumed as the ally of "an injured woman," trembled, and had not a word to say.

"I've a great mind," continued Tresham, with an oath, "to kick you from the top of the stairs to the bottom for your immeasurable insolence."

"It would be better for you, my lord," retorted the man, firmly, "that you did no such thing. I come here for no harm. You have never known me commit a single act of dishonesty. I never broke open the locks of drawers to get at things that don't belong to me," added he, with a significant glance at what was before him. "As I could not find your lordship below, and as I knew the lady was not at home, I came upstairs to ask for my wages. Pay me. The quarter is passed by several weeks; and I've a right now to half a year, if

it is not your intention to keep me any longer. But I do not press that. Pay me what is overdue, and if you wish it, I will leave you directly."

Tresham's fury was abated by this demand for money, which he was utterly incompetent to satisfy.

"I will settle with you to-morrow, fellow," replied he.

"I trust you will, my lord," said the man, leaving the room sulkily, and going down to the women he had left below.

He had scarcely explained to the laundress and her daughter the present position of affairs, when a loud peal was heard from the gate bell; and, looking out, Thomas saw that a carriage was drawn up before the house. Running forward to open the gate, he perceived that the carriage was occupied by only one individual—an elderly gentleman, whom he had never before seen.

“ Is this Lord Sidney Tresham’s house ?” inquired the stranger.

“ Yes, sir,” replied Thomas.

“ Is his Lordship within ?”

“ He is, sir,” was the answer. “ What name shall I say ?”

“ The Duke of Ellingfield.”

“ I will tell my master immediately,” said Thomas. “ Will not your Grace walk in ?”

“ Yes,” replied the Duke, alighting from the carriage.

Having ushered his Grace into the parlour, Thomas went upstairs to the room in which he had left his master, but this time he knocked at the door. No voice was heard in reply, and the servant would have thought that the room was vacant, had not a shuffling sound as of drawers stealthily closed been audible.

“ Is your Lordship there ?” interrogated Thomas in a loud voice, anxious to disturb Tresham in his search for the casket.

The door was at length opened by his Lordship, who, on being interrupted a second time by his man, saluted him with the words—

“ How now, fellow ? If you persist in intruding on me in this way, I shall be compelled to fulfil my promise, and—— ”

Thomas would hear no more, but stopped his Lordship, saying—

“ I care not for your promises, my Lord, except the promise that you will pay me my quarter’s wages to-morrow. My present errand is to tell you that the Duke of Ellingfield is below, waiting to see your Lordship.”

Tresham started at the name. He expected a letter from his Grace, but had not calculated in the remotest degree that the Duke would pay him a visit. His Lordship, in the threatening posture of his circumstances, and knowing full well that his brother, the Marquis of Selton, would no longer supply funds to feed his extravagance, had, in a fit of despair, applied to

the Duke for pecuniary assistance in the way of *loan*, as he termed such matters, and he now exulted in the hope that his Grace was come with the aid he solicited.

“ Go to the Duke,” said he to Thomas, “ and say I will be with him directly.”

The man went on his errand ; and then Tresham, after trying in vain to close the drawers he had forced, and make them appear as they did before his manipulation, descended to the room where the Duke waited. He was so much confused by the unexpected visit, that although he locked Priscille’s room, he forgot to take away the key.

As soon as his master was seated with the Duke, Thomas said to himself, “ Now, or never ! I am not likely to get another chance.”

Beckoning the two women to follow him softly, he crept upstairs, unlocked the room-door, and the three entered.

“ Fill your bags out of these drawers,” said he.

“ My Lord has been here already, but I trust he hasn’t found what he wants. Quick, my dears ! We’re on ticklish ground. But even should we be detected, I can prove, and so can you, the right owner’s authority. So don’t be afraid. The worst that can happen will only be a furious rumpus.”

While the laundress and her daughter were bestirring themselves with the dresses, Thomas went to the bed’s head, and was not long in discovering the cut in the palliasse. Then thrusting his hand among the straw, he found the morocco case, drew it forth, and secured the treasure in his pocket. In a few minutes more, the women had carefully deposited Priscille’s wardrobe in their bags ; when Thomas, desiring them to descend noiselessly, followed, and the three left the house by the servants’ entrance at the back of the premises.

The Duke and Tresham, meanwhile, were exchanging a few preliminary courtesies under

no little restraint on both sides, and Tresham drew an unfavourable augury from the countenance of his Grace, which was serious, if not stern.

“ You have sent to me, Lord Sidney Tresham, for a loan,” said the Duke, after an embarrassing silence. “ I must confess that, after all which has passed between you and my wife’s sister, I did not expect such an application, and was consequently rather surprised by your selecting me as the recipient of so distinguished a proof of your consideration.”

Tresham writhed under this irony, but did not reply.

“ I am, nevertheless,” resumed his Grace, “ not indisposed to grant your request on one condition.”

“ Name it,” said Tresham.

“ Why,” answered the Duke, “ as I hate many words when few will suffice, I will come at once to the point.”

Tresham bowed his head assentingly.

“Are you prepared, Lord Sidney Tresham, to do justice to my sister-in-law, the divorced Mrs. Leicester, by marrying her?” demanded the Duke.

This was an embarrassing question to Tresham, who knew not how to answer it. Was it worth his while, merely for the sake of extrication from his present difficulties, to relinquish all hope of so rich a prize as Lady Grace? He thought not. Still, it would not be amiss to ascertain the amount with which the Duke might be inclined to gild the pill of marriage with Clara. Lady Grace, though he could hardly persuade himself of such a fact, might possibly reject him; and it would be madness, by hesitation between the two, to lose both. At last he said—

“May I be permitted to ask your Grace how my cousin, Clara Delaunay, is to be endowed?”

“ Endowed !” echoed the Duke ; “ not at all. She will have nothing, except her share of her father’s property at his death. I do not come here, Lord Sidney Tresham, to talk about the *fortune* of Clara, nor,” pursued his Grace, with an ominous expression of countenance, “ her *misfortune* on meeting you in Spain. To a man of honour, I should have thought the sacrifice she then made would sufficiently entitle her to the only reparation in your power ; and as I do not at present exclude you from the category of men of honour,” added the Duke, in a tone not accordant with his words, “ I will comply with your recent request for a loan of a thousand pounds, contingent on your marrying Clara Delaunay.”

Tresham was now placed in rather an awkward dilemma. To renounce every hope of Lady Grace’s vast fortune merely for a loan of a thousand pounds, was not to be thought of. Neither, on the other hand, was it pleasant even

to him, to forfeit all claim to reputation as a man of honour in the eyes of the Duke, who might not yet be aware to what extent his character was damaged. His Lordship's hesitation, however, soon ceased. The beauty of Grace, and her still more beautiful wealth, determined him; and with the unblushing turpitude of a practised violator of truth, he replied—

“ I beg decidedly to decline your Grace’s considerate proposal. You talk of my honour. Do you imagine I should consult it by a union with a woman who, at the present moment, is living with another man ?”

This was the second time that Tresham had launched this base calumny, first to Lady Grace, and now to his present visitor. On hearing it, the Duke rose, and, bowing stiffly to his Lordship, left the room, entered his carriage, and drove off.

Tresham was not a little confounded at this

unpleasant termination to a visit from which, at first, he drew the most happy augury.

“ Confound the old fool !” soliloquized he. “ It would seem that he came on purpose to insult me. Were it not for his age, and one or two other unpleasant considerations, I would call him out. It might be an exciting novelty to shoot a Duke. But there are many reasons why it would not be wise, just at present, to risk the chance of an appearance at Bow Street, or any other police-office. When he was first announced, I made sure of the thousand pounds. But curse his conditions !—I’ll have Grace Dalzell, after all. Yet, why doesn’t she write and appoint a time for the promised interview ? Meanwhile, what am I to do for want of money ? I am bound hand and foot ; yet I cannot remain here. My affairs frown at me hideously. Ah ! I forget. There still remain Priscille’s jewels. By them I may raise cash enough to start me to Paris, and, moreover, gain me admittance to

some of the *maisons-de-jeu* there. The French, to be sure, are knowing fellows, and might see through my mode of play ; but I am more than a match for the foolish young Englishmen who throng the hazard-tables in the Palais Royal. The jewels—the jewels are the only things to help me in my extremity, and those I will possess ; for sure I am that Priscille, whom I eyed narrowly as she went out, did not carry them off with her. Curse the old Duke for interrupting me in my search ! I will now resume it.”

So saying, Tresham ran up the stairs, expecting to find Priscille’s room locked, and the key in his pocket. On arriving at the door, however, he found it open, with the key in the lock. For a moment he was bewildered ; then rushing in and gazing about him, he saw that the pillow of the bed had been thrown aside, and that fragments of straw were lying here and there on the counterpane. By further scrutiny, he

discovered the opening in the palliasse ; and being convinced that the treasure had been hidden there, he exclaimed,—

“ Fool, fool, fool ! I have been outwitted ; and that scoundrel, Thomas, has purloined Priscille’s property. The fellow, doubtless, has flown to London ; but I’ll have him apprehended. O, that I had not sent away Priscille !”

Baffled, mortified, and humiliated, Tresham abandoned himself to despair. The shadows of evening gradually deepened ; and when midnight came, he threw himself on his bed, and sought repose, if that might be so called, which brought with it scaring dreams of his past life and present destitution.

On arising unrefreshed the next morning, he was greeted by the following letter :—

“ **LORD SIDNEY TRESHAM,**

“ This is to inform you that my dresses and casket of jewellery are now safe in my posses-

sion, in spite of the felonious endeavours of your Lordship to rob me of them. That you forced the locks of my drawers, and made other thievish attempts, is known, you see, to

“ PRISCILLE.”

CHAPTER V.

HOW TO MAKE A TAILOR'S FORTUNE.

TRESHAM's fury, on the receipt of Priscille's bitter note, knew no bounds. He could not deny, even to himself, that in charging him with attempted felony, the Columbine was justified ; and he smarted to think that Thomas, by whose agency he believed the jewels had been removed, was beyond his vengeance, as the man had acted only on behalf of the right owner of the property. But meditation would avail him nothing. He

must act ; and his first necessity was to fly from Kew and hide himself in the labyrinth of London.

But, though Priscille had succeeded in saving *her* wardrobe, his Lordship could not attempt to secure *his*, and was compelled to leave it behind him ; not out of any wish to lessen his landlord's loss in respect of rent, for to that he was callous, but because an attempt to remove his apparel might lead to the detection of his purpose. Thus, without any other possession in the world than the garments in which he stood, he slunk away on his road to the metropolis.

“ Truly,” said he to himself, as he walked onwards, “ I am in a critical position. No money, no credit, not even a change of clothes ! A pleasant state for a man who writes Lord before his name ! And I fear I deserve it. Have I not reduced others to the same condition—men and women ? Still it is hard to bear. Though I am not bookish, like Grace

Dalzell, there is a passage in Macbeth which haunts me :—

‘ This even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison’d chalice
To our own lips.’

No doubt. But I don’t like these truths ; and I wish I had never gone to see the play containing such stern and disagreeable admonitions. They make me think of Clara Delaunay, which is not very consoling. But a truce with morals. How am I to live ? That is now the only question worth a moment’s thought.”

Thus pondering, Tresham, who did not let the grass grow under his feet, arrived at Hyde Park Corner, when, as if inspired by London air, a bright thought struck him.

Few places in the world are so salubrious to a man whose principles are somewhat out of order, as London : no spot is more abundant in facilities by which one individual may lay siege

to the pocket of another. Speculative tradesmen, Joint-Stock Companies, Bubble-Banks, &c., woo the aspiring adventurer at every turn, and seem to take it as a compliment if he will condescend to plunder them. The flimsiest and most improbable pretence is sufficient: not even the shadow of consistency is required: the tongue of a rogue lulls official men to sleep as effectually as the poppies of Somnus.

Relying on this evident truth, Tresham said to himself, "Cannot I contrive to victimize Smith, my tailor, and extract from him both clothes and money? Of course I can. Have I not a plausible tongue? Why was it given me unless for my own advantage? I am already largely in debt to Smith. But what does that signify? Nay, does it not place me on a vantage ground, seeing that men are prone to throw good money after bad? And surely it will not be difficult to cajole Smith by using the all-powerful name of Lady Grace."

Accordingly, mastering all his confidence and effrontery, he went to the house of a tailor in a street contiguous to May Fair, and soon obtained an interview with the master, whose first conjecture was that Tresham, at last, had called to pay a long out-standing bill.

“I want you, Mr. Smith,” said his lordship, with a patronising air, “to make me, with the utmost possible haste, a couple of suits of clothes—one for the morning, and the other for dress.”

The tailor drew a wry face. “I fear,” replied he, “your lordship forgets that you are already deeply in my debt, and that I have been—”

Tresham, who did not wish to hear the conclusion of Mr. Smith’s remark, interrupted him by saying—

“Forget it! oh, no. I am fully aware of it; and that is the very reason why I come to you in preference to others who are anxious for my

custom. It is in my power to convince you, beyond the possibility of doubt, that you will very speedily be paid, followed by advantages to yourself which you little dream of."

Mr. Smith shook his head in token of incredulity, saying, "If your lordship pleases, I should like, first of all, to see a little of your money. Were all my customers as forgetful of me as your lordship, I positively could not carry on my business."

"Nonsense, man!" exclaimed Tresham. "I shall soon be able to make your fortune. Now listen. Out of my perfect esteem and friendship for you, I will not scruple to confide to your ears a delicate secret."

Smith bowed his head in acknowledgment of his lordship's condescension.

"You have heard, I suppose," resumed Tresham, "of the very wealthy heiress, Lady Grace Dalzell."

"Often and often," replied the tailor. "But

I do not exactly see what that has to do with your lordship's debt to me."

"Everything," rejoined Tresham. "Her ladyship is a distant connection of my family; and the fact is, I am engaged to marry her. Thus, in addition to my own custom, provided you now accede to my wishes, you will have the making of all the new liveries for the wedding, and constantly afterwards; besides my recommendation to the numerous friends by whom I shall be surrounded in the brilliant position that awaits me. In addition to this, the commanding influence accruing from the vast riches I shall shortly possess, fully warrants me in the expectation of being elevated to the House of Peers, when I will employ my interest with the minister to obtain for you, Smith, some government contracts."

Mr. Smith mused for awhile, and then said, "When will your lordship want the clothes?"

“Positively in two days,” replied Tresham.
“You have my measure.”

“It shall be done,” said the tailor; “and I am obliged to you, my lord, for the promise of your patronage.”

“Rely on it,” answered Tresham; “and be assured that your fortune is made. I already have a prophetic glimpse of you in your carriage driving down to your country mansion. But, at present, you must do something else for me. At this moment, I happen, from one cause and another, to be a little short of cash. My allowance from my brother, the Marquis, will not be due till three months hence, and it might damage me with him who is formality itself, should I desire to anticipate it. It would, moreover, be absurd in me, with my prospects, to put myself under pecuniary obligations to any man, however related to me. Besides which, it might be injurious in a still dearer and infinitely more important quarter, were Lady

Grace to suspect that I was financially inconvenienced. To no other man in the world than yourself, Smith, would I confide matters of so delicate a nature. You will see, therefore, how natural it is that I should desire to avoid such an impression on the part of Lady Grace, which can be accomplished by your lending me the small sum of two hundred pounds on my bond, bearing twenty per cent. interest, for the short time I shall want the money—say six weeks.”

Though this was a tempting offer, Mr. Smith would rather it had not been made.

“ Two hundred pounds !” exclaimed he. “ I have not so much in the house. If I grant your Lordship’s request to secure your patronage, I must borrow at least half the sum.”

“ Never mind that,” said Tresham ; “ but consider the golden and permanent results to be acquired by your endeavour to oblige me temporarily.”

The bait was in Smith’s mouth, and he was

hooked. "The money shall be forthcoming, my Lord," said he.

"Good!" ejaculated Tresham. "But I say, Smith, you must let me have fifty pounds now, and I will wait for the other hundred and fifty till the clothes come home, which must be in two days."

"Where shall I send the things, my lord?" asked the tailor.

This was a puzzling question at the moment. Tresham was homeless; and being in debt at numerous hotels at the west-end of the town, it would be dangerous to trust any of them with so valuable a parcel, a detention of which would, in his existing circumstances, be almost fatal to him. For once, Tresham's presence of mind was at fault. But he speedily recovered from his confusion, and replied, "O, it will be best to send the goods and money, carefully packed and sealed, to the house of my brother, the Marquis of Selton, in Belgrave Square."

“ Very well, my lord,” replied Mr. Smith. “ I will now go and fetch you the fifty pounds.”

The tailor disappeared, but soon returned with the money, apologizing for not being able to furnish the sum in one note. “ So,” added he, “ your Lordship must be pleased to receive it in small notes and sovereigns.”

“ Don’t mention it,” said Tresham, to whom the miscellaneous nature of the cash was infinitely more convenient than one note, for he knew not where he could have changed it. To every man of business acquainted with his Lordship, he was in debt, and he could not have asked any of them to convert the note into smaller money, without leaving behind him some portion of the amount.

A difficulty, however, still awaited him, resulting from his instruction to Smith, to send the parcel, which was to contain his clothes and the remaining hundred and fifty pounds of his loan, to his brother’s house, from which the

Marquis had excluded him. But it would be time enough to think of that to-morrow.

“I must detain you, my Lord, a little longer,” said the tailor. “I have sent for my lawyer to make a draught of the bond which your Lordship is to give me, and to witness the payment of fifty pounds by way of instalment.”

“Very well,” replied Tresham. “But do not keep me long, as I ought this very hour to be with Lady Grace.”

“My lawyer,” replied Smith, “lives only a few doors off, and he or his clerk will be here directly.”

The interval, until the legal gentleman appeared, was occupied in a discussion about materials for the two suits, and in a further allusion to the lucrative patronage of Tresham after his union with the great heiress. This anticipation, so exciting to the tailor, was interrupted by the announcement of the lawyer

himself, which caused Mr. Smith to leave the room for a moment.

“ The credulous ass,” said Tresham, chuckling to himself, “ is gone to fill his lawyer’s head with those magnificent prospects I have been opening to his view. I wish I could see them clearly myself.”

The man of law and the tailor now entered the room. Duly penetrated with Tresham’s greatness, the former bowed obsequiously at every step, as he advanced towards the chair in which our nobleman was seated. The business was soon concluded ; and then Tresham—once more in possession of money—called a cab and rode off to locate himself in one of the hotels in the vicinity of the rail to Dover, where he intended to remain till the clothes and additional hundred and fifty pounds should be in his own hands. But, previously to his departure, he requested Smith, as he himself had no banker, to send the money in sovereigns.

“A capital day’s work!” exclaimed he to himself, as he proceeded eastward. “Why, this desperate morning, it would have been the dream of a madman to anticipate such luck. I am afloat once more. Now, Fortune, be propitious to me! I have not seen thy smiles of late. All my recent ventures in London have been most disastrous. Let me try what Paris will do. But shall I be able to restrain my hand till I arrive there? I doubt it. Who can look into the secrets of the next minute?”

The above *ruse* on Mr. Smith was perpetrated the day after Lady Grace’s visit to Clara at Mrs. Ribble’s lodging-house. Little did Tresham think, when he was swindling the tailor by playing off the name of Lady Grace, that she herself had just succoured the unhappy victim of his perfidy; the sight of whose sufferings fortified her foregone resolution to banish the remorseless profligate from her heart, and even from her acquaintance.

On arriving at the Railroad Hotel, he secured a bed for three nights, took a hasty dinner, and, not knowing how to beguile the hours till bed-time, strolled across Waterloo Bridge, and soon found himself in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square—that region of gambling-houses not inaptly called “hells.” The *genius loci* was too strong for his powers of resistance, and he entered one of the dens merely *pour passer le tems*. In few of these infamous places was Lord Sidney unknown; and in the present house he was immediately recognized by the porter, who, unbolting sundry fastenings, gave his Lordship ready admittance.

Play was going on with great animation; and Tresham quickly perceived that some of the gamesters were inexperienced hands. At first he contented himself with betting on the cards, and uniformly won. He was then challenged to play, and accordingly took his seat at the table. After a few throws of the dice, he purposely lost

to the amount of twenty pounds, when, proposing to double the stakes, which was at once acquiesced in, he shortly, by the occult science known only to profound students and unscrupulous practitioners, not only recovered his first loss, but won so as to double the fifty pounds he had brought from the tailor. He then left the house, and returned exultingly to his temporary abode.

Flushed by this omen of his prospective success in France, he waited impatiently for the arrival of his new attire, preparatory to his flight to Paris.

On the following day he went to the house of the French ambassador, in Grosvenor Square, and procured his passport. Walking down Regent Street, on his return, he saw Lady Grace's carriage waiting opposite Great Marlborough Street. He caught a glimpse of her Ladyship seated in it, and imagined she would soon descend, when he might accost her; but, while

he lingered for this purpose, he was not a little disconcerted on seeing the *ci-devant* Mrs. Leicester approach. The carriage steps were then let down, as previously arranged ; and Clara having joined her cousin, the two ladies drove off.

At this moment, an empty cab slowly passed Tresham, whose first impulse was to hail it, and order the driver to follow the carriage, now at only a slight distance, and easily distinguishable. His curiosity was intense to ascertain where the cousins were going, and he longed for another chance of conversing with Grace.

But on farther reflection he was convinced that no good could accrue to him from thus intruding himself on the heiress. With all her sweetness of disposition, Grace was firm in her purposes, and could not be deterred by importunity, or even menace, from following the course which, on reflection, she had adopted ; and Tresham, since his last interview with her, must

have been thoroughly impressed with this truth. Still, the meeting of Grace and Clara, and their apparent familiarity, disquieted Tresham: it was ominous of ruin to his hope of success with the heiress of the house of Dalzell; and his spirits, recently raised by successful hits, were again cast down. Oh, how he execrated his folly in giving Clara's address to Grace.

The carriage was soon passing rapidly through the Quadrant.

“Did you see Lord Sidney?” said Grace to her companion.

“Yes,” replied Clara.

“It was very strange,” pursued Grace, “that he should have been at the precise spot at which you and I arranged to meet. Though I do not distrust you, Clara, I am tempted to ask whether you have had any communication with him since my call on you?”

“On my soul, no,” answered Clara.

“I thought not,” rejoined Grace. “His con-

duct to you—whatever lurking feelings of attachment might still linger in your breast—ought to make it impossible that you should notice him, or even open any letter he should address to you. And his conduct to *me*——”

Lady Grace suddenly paused. She had said more than she intended; but the words were beyond recal. In an instant, she was painfully sensible of her inadvertence, for Clara's face flushed into crimson; and, with a trembling voice, she exclaimed—

“ You ! *you*, my dearest friend and cousin ! Can the arch-deceiver have dared to address *you* ?”

“ Even so,” replied Grace. “ I intended that you should never guess this. But see how the tongue will sometimes act without the warrant of the mind. Do not, however, be uneasy at the thought that *I* shall consent to be the wife of Tresham. He craved humbly, and with a confession of his unworthiness, that I would

grant him an interview the day before yesterday, on the pretence of making an important communication. I received him with cold and distant courtesy ; and, having reproached him for not marrying you, to whom he is bound by every tie of honour and justice, renounced with scorn his engagement to myself plighted more than two years ago. From him I demanded your address, and succeeded in obtaining it. You now know all.”

“ Oh, Grace !” ejaculated Clara, “ I, I am the unconscious author of all this misery ! And yet, knowing my guilt, you, like an angel, came to comfort me with loving words, and succour me in the extremity of my destitution. Ah, wretched me ! I am not worthy to fall at your feet, and thank and bless you through my tears.”

“ Do not speak so,” returned Lady Grace. “ It was your destitution that brought me to you. Adversity, such as your’s, obliterates all consideration except that of relief. Misfortune

is the strongest of all claims. Let us not, however, dwell on this wretched theme ; but think how your sorrow can be alleviated.”

Clara hid her face in her hands, and wept.

“ Come, come, dry your eyes, and calm your emotion,” said Grace. “ We are at our journey’s end.”

The business at the banking-house being speedily arranged, our companions returned homeward. Clara was set down in Regent Street, and walked to her lodging ; Lady Grace, sad and thoughtful, drove to her mansion ; and, on arriving there, went to the library, and sat down to compose the agitation of her nerves before dressing for dinner. It was a fine autumnal evening. The windows of the room faced the west ; and, as she gazed towards the setting sun, a magnificent sky-pageant was disclosed. Being—like all persons of sensitive imagination—an adorer of Nature, the attention

of Grace was attracted, and at length absorbed, by the gorgeous show, which seemed to be displayed for the purpose of soothing her dejection.

At first, her eye was fixed on innumerable strata of clouds, glowing as if on fire, heaped one on another, and stretched in vast lines on the horizon as on a bed. While she looked intently at the spectacle, the strata moved farther apart, revealing deep interspaces of intensely bright emerald ; and, as she lifted her eyes towards the zenith, a multitude of scarlet clouds were seen hovering like a canopy over the radiance that seemed to touch the earth. Towards the north, the sky presented fields of violet and green, fading away into tender and slumberous tints. “Even with a thought,” the long, glowing bars changed into mighty lines of crimson—the emerald depths turned into purple chasms—and the scarlet canopy became gold. The vision then assumed other hues, presenting in

succession all the colours of the prism, till the pomp and the glory were swallowed up in night. It was truly a celestial display—a revelation of God's “handiwork.”

Grace was enraptured by the ineffable grandeur, and felt, as all should feel, how poor and paltry is the utmost height of earthly ostentation compared with the splendour of the firmament. And our hopes and fears, how little worthy are they to engross the immortal mind? This reflection was succeeded by a serenity so perfect and holy, that, for a time, Grace wondered how so worthless, and mean, and depraved a person as Tresham could ever have disturbed her mind or heart. Still she was unable to avoid reflecting on the transitory nature of the spectacle she had just witnessed. No separate aspect of it had a longer endurance than a minute; and though one gorgeous feature was succeeded quickly by ano-

ther, a short time sufficed to bury all in darkness :

“ So quick bright things come to confusion !”

Earthly happiness is equally fleeting. Repose and continuity of bliss are the attributes only of heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

TRESHAM'S DEPARTURE FOR PARIS—PRISCILLE'S
ENGAGEMENT THERE—CLARA'S FLIGHT.

To return to Tresham.

When Lady Grace's carriage could no longer be seen by him, he ruminated on the chance he had lost of again conversing with the heiress.

“Clara,” thought he, “seems born on purpose to thwart me. She is my evil genius. How can I hope to thrive with Grace if Clara has opportunities to pour into her ear the ugly

facts of our intimacy and final separation? I should be mad, in my present circumstances, to wait in London for the promised repetition of an interview with Grace, even had I not already determined to be off. I am in danger of being arrested every moment, and am destitute of any friend to whom I could apply for bail. I must now go to my brother's house and arrange for the reception of my parcel from that fool Smith."

Thus thinking, he called a cab and drove to Belgrave Square without fear, as he knew the Marquis was not in town. A few minutes' talk with the hall porter, aided by the bribe of a sovereign, induced the man to promise that he would receive the parcel and take care of it till his lordship should call again, though in doing this he violated the orders of his master, and rendered himself liable to be dismissed from a good place, were the Marquis to hear of his disobedience.

"So far, so good, as regards minor matters," said Tresham to himself, while he proceeded to the railroad hotel. "But that disastrous meeting in Regent Street can hardly fail to be destructive of my best hopes. Grace will certainly discard me."

On the following evening he went again to Belgrave Square. The package had been delivered there, and was given to him. After arriving at his hotel, he ascertained, on opening the parcel, that the clothes and money were quite safe. Early the next morning he left London by the train to Dover, and in the evening was on the road to Paris.

It has been said that the acquaintance of Priscille with Lord Sidney Tresham had failed to realise the magnificent hopes at first entertained by her. She would not, however, allow the disappointment to rest on her mind, but considered what would be the best steps she could take under her present circumstances.

Her heart—if she had one—was perfectly untouched. She left love and “all that,” to puling girls; and, priding herself on being a woman of the world, refused to tolerate what she rather superfluously termed “foolish nonsense.” Still, to miss a “title,” which at one time she had rashly calculated on, was a loss deserving very serious lamentation for a day or two, though even this loss could scarcely justify prolonged regret. As her silly dream was over, she thought no more about it—there were plenty of other chances in life, and the first that occurred to her was to return to the stage.

Accordingly, on arriving in London, Priscille applied to her theatrical connections. Though it was not yet the season for pantomimes, she hoped to obtain an engagement as an occasional *danseuse*, just by way of filling up the interval till Christmas. But while negotiating for this purpose with a manager of one of the suburban theatres, from whom she could expect only very

humble terms, she was delighted on hearing that a company of English pantomimists was in course of formation by a Parisian *entrepreneur* as a novelty for the sight-lovers of the French capital, and that they were to start in a week for that city. As Priscille enjoyed no little fame in this peculiar branch of the English *drama*, a very handsome offer was made her if she would undertake to gratify the Parisians with her personation of our national Columbine ; and having made a few stipulations on her own part, and agreed to others on the part of the *entrepreneur*, she signed the articles of agreement.

Priscille was especially pleased with this unlooked-for interposition of a continental engagement, which she felt would break the awkwardness of an immediate return to the London stage after having recently left it with boasts of speedily becoming the wife of a nobleman. Actresses are inspired with “envy, malice, and all uncharitableness,” by the elevation to no-

bility (of which there are several instances) of any one of their calling ; and Priscille felt that to be subjected to the laughter and mortifying jests of her professional sisterhood, was not a very pleasant contemplation. She thought, however, that when her foreign engagement should be over, her *liaison* with Tresham would be half forgotten.

After a few rehearsals, our Columbine left England for France, in company with the Harlequin, Clown, Pantaloons, Queen of Elysium, and other personages of that intellectual stage performance. If the assumption of a foreign name increased the dramatic attraction of Priscille in London, it was no less advantageous to her to appear in Paris as an English dancer of female hornpipes. She accordingly took the name of Vernon, and renounced “Mademoiselle” for “Miss.”

Tresham, on his arrival in Paris, was compelled to be very cautious in his ventures at

play. Though he could now boast the possession of more money than he had recently been master of, he was fully sensible that two hundred and fifty pounds was but a small capital for operations on a large scale. It was therefore obvious that he must try his fortune, in the first instance, at the minor gambling-houses in the Palais Royal, and mount to the others by degrees as success might warrant.

It is not the purpose of the present narrative to reveal the mysterious iniquities of gaming in the Parisian "hells" at the latter part of the reign of Louis Philippe. Suffice it to say, that Tresham, who played chiefly with young and silly Englishmen, soon doubled his funds, and at length found himself warranted in obtaining admittance to the "Cercle des Etrangers," in the Rue de Richelieu (then the principal and most splendid of those nefarious establishments), where his consummate skill at the hazard-table, not in the least embarrassed by any principle

of honour, aided him in winning immense sums.

Being now a wealthy man, and Fortune continuing to favour him, Tresham took a handsome residence, hired a retinue of servants, and justified his position in society by living “like a lord.” No foreigner in Paris was so much talked of as he ; and when Priscille arrived in that gayest of capitals, she heard endless anecdotes of the magnificence of her former lover. Though she had little reason to rejoice in the prosperity of one by whom she had certainly not been handsomely treated, she secretly welcomed the news, because she hoped it might be possible to patch up the quarrel so as eventually to share in his luxury.

“ I cannot deny even to my own mind,” thought she, “ that I have bitterly insulted Tresham, especially by that note I wrote to him on the recovery of my trinkets. But then he must be fully aware that his virulent abuse of

me is a full set-off against whatever I then said. We are thus on a perfect equality in that respect; and I must trust to my attractions for the rest. The hope of being seen on the stage by him will animate me to assume my best looks and most alluring demeanour. And should these fail to regain him, I may, by being here, succeed in extracting some money from him; for in that particular he must be conscious that he never behaved to me with liberality. Should neither of these hopes be realised, Tresham shall feel my resentment."

In his Lordship's discharged servant, Thomas, Priscille placed entire reliance. He was her confidential correspondent in London; and having occasion to write to him, she described the present prosperity of his late master, exaggerating, if possible, his wealth and splendour of living. Little did she calculate on the effect to be produced by this communication.

Priscille, however, would take no steps to

renew her intimacy with Lord Sidney till she should have made her appearance on the stage. With a woman's instinct, she reckoned much on her fascination when aided by dress, music, artificial light, and all the appliances of a theatre. She could not forget that she had at first captivated him "on the boards." Why should not this happen again?

A night was at length fixed for the performance of the English company. The play-goers of Paris were on the alert to witness so curious a novelty; and among the rest, Tresham, who wondered who on earth Miss Vernon could be, determined to be present. But how can his amazement and vexation be described when, in the person of the unknown, he recognised his London mistress, Priscille, and by aid of his *lorgnette*, detected, among her decorations, the diamond necklace and bracelets he had given her! These ornaments roused certain recollections not very favourable to his self-complacency,

and he left the theatre with disgust before the end of the pantomime. As he recalled her threats, during the altercation at Kew, he was not without a foreboding that her presence in Paris was ominous of mischief to him.

We must now, for awhile, leave the French capital, and return to London.

Thomas, who had lived in Lord Sidney's service before the separation between him and Mrs. Leicester, was one day walking through Regent Street, when he saw that lady passing in a contrary direction. Wishing to say a few words to her, he retraced his steps, but did not offer to speak to his former mistress till she turned into Foubert's Passage. He then overtook her, and respectfully touching his hat, begged permission to communicate some news respecting Lord Sidney. Though Clara had for ever banished Tresham from her heart, she could not forget that another, equally related to him and to herself, might soon demand a

father's care. Therefore, she listened to what his Lordship's former valet had to say, and from him she heard a glowing account of Tresham's wealth and style of living in Paris. Thanking Thomas for his information, she left him and pursued her way to Mrs. Ribble's house, where she secluded herself in her solitary chamber to muse over the unexpected intelligence just imparted to her.

"Shall I," thought she, "be justified in carrying my own resentment so far as to deprive my unborn child of a father's protection without an effort to secure for it so great a blessing? Nothing on earth shall induce me to be reconciled to Tresham. But how, in future years, shall I vindicate my silence to the child with respect to its other parent? Besides, Tresham, it appears, is now rich. Though he has most dishonourably broken faith with me, he may, out of mere self-love, have some fondness for his child, on whose account I

am strongly tempted to appeal personally to him.

While weighing in her own mind the reasons for and against this step, one consideration presented a very formidable obstacle to her half-conceived purpose. How could she absent herself from England without consulting Lady Grace, whose kindness to her had been that of an angel? Yet to do this would be impossible now that she knew of the former relative position of Grace and Tresham. Could she, under any circumstances, disappear, without acquainting her cousin and benefactor with her plans and motives? What a vile return for the munificence of Grace, and—more precious still—her loving words, would be made by so mysterious a flight! It must not be contemplated for an instant.

These thoughts seemed for awhile to determine her against her first impulse on hearing what Thomas had communicated. But soon

the yearnings of a mother's heart for her expected infant overcame her wiser scruples, and she rashly resolved to use the pecuniary resources afforded by her cousin, in a journey to Paris.

But the step was a desperate one. Clara pictured to herself the surprise and fear which Grace could not fail to undergo when she should be told that her cousin had disappeared, no one knew where or how. Still, she persisted in her scheme.

To this decision she did not arrive without bitter self-reproaches and tormenting consciousness that her character—already tarnished—would be more deeply compromised than ever,—a reflection which, though it scarcely shook her purpose, plunged her into profound despondency.

Her mental torture was aggravated by the entrance of Mrs. Ribble, who exclaimed, in a transport of admiration, “Oh, Mrs. Sidney, that

pattern of our sect, Lady Grace, has took and sent a brace of pheasants for you. Heaven bless her! Her Ladyship knows what's good for females. Suppose I do one of 'em for your dinner to-day. I know how to serve it up nice with bread-sauce and beautiful-made gravy. The t'other will keep for a week to come. But how's this?" added she, looking at Clara's pale and melancholy face and dejected attitude. "You seem quite queer and low this morning. What's the matter? You mustn't mope and let yourself down in these quandaries. It ain't good for our sect; 'cause much of it ruins our figures, which it is our duty in this life to keep 'em up and improve. And how *are* we to do it without a merry heart and a good appetite and our five meals reg'lar? Why, I shou'dn't be half the woman I am if I was to let myself be hipped, and go about up stairs and down stairs a'griffin and dragoning myself down to the ground, and grizzling, and doubling myself up, and not mind-

ing my meals? A female is bound to look to her figure; and sure I am she can't do it proper—leastways she *don't* do it proper—if she aint hearty at all her meals, which you never is. Would Lady Grace have such a noble shape as she has, if she didn't take kindly to her meals? Let me do one of the pheasants to-day."

To get rid of the landlady's loquacity, Clara assented to her request, and Mrs. Ribble, pleased on her own account no less than that of her lodger, left the room to attend to the bird.

While the dinner was in preparation, Clara went to the banking-house, and drew at once the sum placed there to her credit by Grace, not knowing how long she might be detained in Paris. She then returned to her lodgings, but had little appetite to partake of the pheasant, the very sight of which distressed her as a new proof of the anxious tenderness of her cousin, to

whose kindness she was about to make so seemingly callous a requital.

The following morning, without saying a word to Mrs. Ribble, Clara left London for Dover.

CHAPTER VII.

PRISCILLE IN FRANCE—TRESHAM AND HIS TWO
FEMALE CORRESPONDENTS—HIS TACTICS—
PRISCILLE'S REVENGE—CLARA'S DESPAIR.

THE first night's exhibition, in Paris, of the English pantomime was received with acclamation, though a close observer could not fail to detect some latent derision in the character of the applause. The clown's jokes were not understood ; neither were his grimaces relished ; and no fun could be discovered in the frequent

“flooring” of the pantaloon. Our Columbine’s dancing was execrated as “*barbare* ;” and though the male connoisseurs admired her face and feminine proportions, their praise was qualified, and Priscille was voted “*jolie, mais gauche*.” These unfavourable impressions, however, were not suspected by the performers, whose self-love inclined them to interpret to their own advantage the vociferations they heard. But the French manager, who, of course, knew his own countrymen better than the strangers could be supposed to do, derived an augury from the reception of our English mimes which inclined him to believe their attraction would be only temporary.

On the following morning, Priscille, who thought no time was to be lost in prosecuting her design on Tresham, set about discovering his address ; and having obtained it without much difficulty, she wrote the following letter.

“ Meurice’s Hotel, August 29th, 1847.

“ MY DEAR LORD,

“ I cannot guess with what feelings you will receive the intelligence that I—your Priscille—am at present in Paris, having accepted an engagement to perform here (under the name of Miss Vernon) with other English pantomimists.

“ Do not, my Lord, be surprised that I should address you after our very bitter and angry altercation at Kew, for you know lovers’ quarrels are proverbially short. And though I confess I *was* exceedingly provoking, I trust you will be candid and generous enough to admit that you returned my taunts in full measure. Our charges against each other being thus neutralised, cease to exist. *You* cannot accuse me, nor *I* upbraid you. Recrimination would be preposterous. In my own breast, all is forgotten. Why should not you be equally oblivious?

“ I am ready to return to your protection,

waving the white flag of peace. Will you receive me as of yore ?

“ I will present myself at your house to-morrow, hoping to be welcomed with open arms and kind salutations.

“ Shall it be so ?

“ Your devoted,

“ PRISCILLE.”

“ To the LORD SIDNEY TRESHAM.”

Clara Delaunay had now arrived in Paris. For a time, she domiciliated herself in the very hotel previously chosen by the London Columbine. The two ladies had never seen each other ; so that no mischief could be apprehended from any accidental *rencontre*.

It would be difficult to determine whether surprise or annoyance predominated in the breast of Tresham on reading Priscille’s letter. But he instantly resolved neither to see nor write to her. The person who had charge of the *porte-*

cochère of his residence received orders not to admit any lady whatever who might call, and invariably to deny his being at home. The Columbine's advances put him into a towering passion. He loathed her with the intensity of hate; and would sooner have received the Fiend himself into his dwelling than his recent companion at Kew.

But a more embarrassing surprise was in store for him a day afterwards, when, descending to his breakfast-room, he saw on the table another missive directed in a female hand with which he was perfectly familiar, but which was now distasteful to him.

Of late years, indeed, letters had been harbingers of trouble and mortification to Tresham. For the most part, they contained either reproaches, or importunate applications for money, accompanied by threats of law. The appearance, therefore, of a sealed epistle was poison to his eyes. No one was likely to write to him on a

pleasant theme, and he laboriously shunned whatever was *unpleasant*. By his own acts, he had debarred himself of the sweets of correspondence. He cursed the inventor of penmanship, and scarcely ever wrote to any person, as he had a rooted dislike of replies ; neither did he often acknowledge the receipt of a letter. Like Ajax, in Shakspeare's *TROILUS AND CRESSIDA*, he "professed *not* answering."

With a sudden determination, as a man might seize a reptile which he could not avoid, Tresham clutched the letter, and read as follows :—

" Meurice's Hotel, August 30th, 1847.

" **LORD SIDNEY,**

" I have arrived in Paris on a special errand to you.

" You must not mistake my purpose. I am very far from seeking—nay, I would not permit —any, the slightest, renewal of our former intimacy. Still, I anxiously wish to see you. If

you grant me an interview, our meeting must be a serious, if not a solemn, one. It must be the last time we see each other in this world.

“ I ask of you nothing whatever for myself individually ; but you cannot fail to be aware that I must soon entitle you to the name of father to an infant who, if it live, can have no other hope of protection than your acknowledgment of its claim on yourself as its parent. To procure this, and to obtain some valid settlement on behalf of one who must otherwise be destitute, are my motives in coming here, especially as I am not ignorant that you are now possessed of ample means to comply with the petition of my heart.

“ Grant what I beseech, and I will forgive you for having plunged me into utter ruin ; though as I have been your accomplice against myself, I must accept with tears the bitter wage of an offender. But the child ! the helpless,

innocent child ! Save, O save it from misery,
and may God bless you !

“ I wait with trembling solicitude for your reply, which please address to Mrs. Delaunay at the above hotel. Should I not hear in the course of to-morrow, I will, on the following day, call upon you, when I hope you will make the arrangement here craved.

“ Your cousin,

“ CLARA DELAUNAY.”

“ To LORD SIDNEY TRESHAM.”

Any attempt to describe with adequate force Tresham’s perplexity and dismay on receiving the above would be vain. The profligate keenly apprehended that he might be caught in his own toils. What could he do ? Fly from Paris, and abandon the golden mine he believed he had just discovered ? Anything would be preferable to that.

“ Was ever human being so beset as I am ?”

thought he. “One hostile woman is worse than ten male enemies. A man knows how to deal with the latter ; but by what open opposition can he confront the wily stratagems and perseverance of the other sex ? The temper of Priscille is concentrated venom ; but in the heart of poor Clara nothing but tenderness resides. I must not, however, be unmindful that the instinct of a mother may make me tremble even at *her*. I never reckoned on this disastrous turn in my affairs. And, as if one importunate woman were not more than enough for one man, two assail me at the same time, as if to nip my growing fortunes in the bud.”

Unlucky man of pleasure ! What subtle trick, what evasion, what daring falsehood could he adopt to rid himself of his two female “ persecutors,” as he called them ?

He happy could not be with either,
But wish’d both the charmers away.

Debased and heartless as Lord Sidney was,

he could not shun a conviction that Clara's appeal to him ought not to be treated as he intended to treat that of Priscille. *Ought* not ; but was it possible, he asked himself, to make any distinction ? The extent of his nefarious “luck,” though great, had been somewhat over-rated. Instead of acting openly and justly with Clara, he sophisticated with himself. He did not choose to consider that he was at present in a position to sink a sum of money sufficiently large to provide for the future maintenance of a child yet unborn, and who had no legal claim on him.

Accordingly, with the callousness of an unprincipled man caring for nothing but self, he resolved to avoid any recognition either of child or mother ; and, as no manœuvre can be so effectual for such a purpose as obstinate silence, he resolved on not taking any notice of Clara's imploring application. To treat Priscille in this way, might have been justified : she had

placed herself out of the pale of sympathy, and was as heartless and profligate as himself. Nevertheless, he feared *her*, and did *not* fear Clara, though he resolved on similar tactics for both ; that is to say, he would not write to either, and left the same instructions with his porter in reference to his cousin as he had already given relative to Priscille.

Both ladies were encountered by the passive resistance of dumbness as regarded their letters, and by denial at the *porte-cochère* when they applied at Tresham's house.

But the effect of these defensive measures was not identical on the two applicants. Clara, who had been deeply injured, and whose affecting request was warranted by nature and justice, received the cruel and unmanly repulse with sighs and despondency. No thought of revenge once crossed her mind. The repulse, indeed, almost broke her heart ; but not a murmur escaped her. She was not insensible to the

heartlessness of her betrayer ; and, though scared and bewildered on thinking of the probable destitution to which her child was doomed even before its birth, she resolved to encounter the worst, whatever it might be, rather than again humble herself to one who seemed resolved to forfeit every claim to be considered a human being.

With Priscille, on the contrary, who had no real cause of complaint, Tresham's conduct roused a spirit of animosity which could be satisfied with nothing short of a ruinous retaliation ; and the English pantomime-scheme having eventually failed, our Columbine was resolved not to quit France without blasting the prospects of her quondam "protector."

There is an old saying, that it is dangerous to play with edge tools. But infinitely more hazardous is it to trifle with and deceive women. Very seldom does a man win at this game ; no, not even should his female antagonist lose. The

scornful conduct of Tresham in making no response to the advances of Priscille, determined her to revenge the insult. Therefore, with the settled malignity of purpose, she denounced him as one who could no longer show his face in England, being not only over head and ears in debt there, but shrewdly suspected of obtaining money on false pretences, and of cheating at the gaming-table. This last accusation told strongly against him in Paris. She added, that he was disowned by his brother, the Marquis of Selton, and by his other English relatives; that he was a "Lord," not in reality, but only by the courtesy of custom; and that his title, so conceded, was of little estimation, as he was without property to back it. In short, according to her report, he was an adventurer—a mere *chevalier d'industrie*.

These denunciations partly true and partly false, found ready acceptance, especially among

those of whom Tresham had won large sums at *hazard* and *rouge et noir*; and, finally, his reputation, in consequence of what Priscille had promulgated, fell into such *mal-odeur*, that he found it advisable to leave Paris with inconvenient speed. Priscille, also—somewhat richer than when she arrived in the French metropolis — left it about the same time, for London.

But alas for Clara ! Ignorant that her betrayer was no longer in France, she remained week after week at Paris, cherishing a kind of forlorn hope that, in some accidental meeting, she might obtain what, it seemed, he intended to deny. To promote this desperate chance, she often sallied forth into the city, and traversed the Boulevards, the busy Rue St. Honoré, the Garden of the Tuileries, the Champs-Elysées, and other places of public resort. “Surely,” thought she, “were he to see me thus wander-

ing, unprotected, and solitary though in crowds, mere pity, if no other emotion, might induce him to speak."

Sad was it to look on her meek and care-worn face, her down-cast eyes, her faltering gait and stooping figure. Wonderful, indeed, is the enduring faith of women in the honour of men ! Clara had been sacrificed by the selfish motives of her father to a husband who, instead of endeavouring to cultivate the feminine virtues and graces inherent in her character, first neglected, and finally repelled her by undeserved reproaches. She then fell into the libertine snares of Tresham. Nevertheless, she would not renounce her belief that some latent principles of goodness still existed in man, and she clung to a hope that these might be developed even in Lord Sidney.

Poor soul ! After her fruitless perambulations in Paris, she would return to the hotel, fatigued,

dejected in mind, and worn out in frame. Reluctant, however, to give up the idea that she might yet casually encounter Tresham in her walks, she so strenuously persevered in them, that, at length, her spirit failed, her strength deserted her, and she became utterly prostrated and lost in despair.

The people at the hotel observed all this. She saw with fear and pain that they observed it; and, feeling reluctant to draw attention too closely on herself under existing circumstances, she deemed it not prudent to continue at Meurice's, but took a private lodging, where, in due time, without the consolation of a female friend, or even distant acquaintance, her child was born.

In the midst of her suffering, the image of her loving friend and benefactress, Grace, often appeared to her bewildered fantasy as an angelic vision whispering words of hope with smiling

lips. This hallucination distressed, even while it comforted, Clara. For how had she lately requited the benevolent acts and devoted affection of her female cousin?

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. RIBBLE'S ALARM—SAPIENT CONJECTURES
—LADY GRACE'S VISIT OF INQUIRY—CONSOLATION.

ON the night of Clara's clandestine departure from London, Mrs. Ribble, harassed by all manner of apprehensions consequent on her lodger's protracted absence, sat up for her return. Midnight passed, and dawn peered in at the windows like a pale ghost announcing dismal tidings.

Few appearances are more ominous than the advent of morning after a night passed in fear and trembling for the safety of one who is dear to the watcher. The arrival of a second day, even in its infancy, seems to confirm our worst fears ; and that which brings light to the eyes, plunges the heart in ten-fold darkness—the darkness of no hope.

It was not, however, exactly with these feelings that Mrs. Ribble beheld the slow and, as it were, stealthy advance of the white day-bringer. No : like Priscille and Tresham, her anxieties uniformly centred in her own interest or gratification. To her, though in rather a different sense from that enunciated by the great ethical poet,

“ — Self-love and social are the same.”

“ Something terrible,” thought she, “ must have happened ; but no steps can’t be took till people is about. Heaven have mercy on us ! What a flurry I’m in ! Where can the poor

thing have gone and wandered ? I can't guess ; and, what's more, it's unbeknown to me. What will Lady Grace say when she takes and hears this ? Why, she'll think I've been and encouraged her to go away. I couldn't do such a wicked thing ; let alone what I loses in the week's rent, and the handling of the money for necessaries. O no ! Fearful I am that they've gone and murdered her, which it will prevent her from lodging in my house any more. A pretty affair for me ! For sence her Ladyship come here, Mrs. Sidney were the very best lodger ever I had. But there ! I'm never in luck as I ought to be ; for it's unbeknown how I strives and labours for my own advantage. Poor Mrs. Sidney ! It's shocking beyond everything. Whatever *can* the new police be about ? They don't ought to let hard-working widows like me, who minds their own affairs, night and day, both when they lays down and when they gets up, to lose their lodgers in this manner ;

'specially them as brings in, one way and the 'tother, a good eight or nine shilling a-week, and money always in hand."

This last consideration drew tears from Mrs. Ribble's eyes.

The whole Row was in a ferment of gossip when news of the mysterious disappearance of their respected neighbour's two-pair-back lodger passed from mouth to mouth. Every inhabitant, without exception, made interest with our land-lady to see the room which had been occupied by the murdered woman ; for that she *had* been murdered was decided by the universal vote of the Row. Indeed, had any one even hinted a remote doubt of such a consummation, he or she would have been denounced as a hard-hearted enemy to the social state, and a cruel and profligate unbeliever.

Every article in Mrs. Sidney's apartment was subjected to a minute examination, and the scrutiny gave birth to a variety of ingenious conject-

tures. One individual surmised that the lodger had committed suicide, because, on going out, she had left her bed unmade. "For," argued he, "it don't stand to reason that any one would be at the trouble of making a bed in which they never meant to sleep no more."

An opinion so ably justified was deemed conclusive by the majority, till one of the spectators—an old woman—declared she "didn't think much of such a notion; because when a person had a bed all to themselves and no one to sleep with 'em, it was no such mighty matter just to give it a shake-up and then tumble in quite comfortable."

This objection was fatal to the general impression recently formed by the first speaker.

Other subtle speculations were not wanting; though still they failed to throw any light on the puzzling fact of Mrs. Sidney's disappearance.

Mysterious are the ways of "penny-a-liners!" Nothing worthy of record—whether a violation

of the law, an accident, or a matter of mere curiosity—can take place anywhere, but your “penny-a-liner” is immediately cognizant of it. He must be omnipresent. How is it? London and its many suburbs cover a vast and intricate space; yet our self-appointed scrutineers are everywhere, lying in wait for some casualty to life or limb, the flight of a defaulter, a fraudulent game at skittles, an ingenious swindle, a robbery, a murder, a midnight outrage, (for “penny-a-liners” never go to bed), the elopement of a young lady with her father’s clerk, a fire, the “walking” of a ghost in a churchyard, &c. In short, whatever happens anywhere is fully described next morning in newspapers lying on the breakfast-tables of comfortable people, and may be perused by others, at the same time, in coffee-shops, taverns, news-rooms and public institutions. Amazing is this widely-spread system of *espionnage*, which is carried on, not by the authorities, but by private and individual enterprise. The “liner” is truly

an ubiquitous presence: no spot is free from him. A man was once heard to say, “It’s a great shame, that it is! I can’t give my own wife in my own room, a little private correction in the shape of a beating for her own good, but them newspapers gets hold of it, and sends the peelers after me. What’s the use of a Englishman’s liberty?”

It is the same in country towns and villages: the “penny-a-liner” is rustic as well as metropolitan; and, if a gigantic gooseberry should present itself, or an apple-tree be in bloom on Christmas day, or a pig be born with two tails, the fact is immediately known to some “liner,” by whose means it is sent abroad on the mighty wings of the press for the wonder and delight of the world.

By the instrumentality of one or more of these gentlemen (whose agency, by-the-by, is, for the most part, of real and vital service to the public), the inscrutable departure of Mrs. Sidney from

her lodging became matter of universal notoriety ; and accordingly Lady Grace, to her infinite alarm, read of her cousin's unaccountable disappearance. She lost no time in going to Mrs. Ribble's house, where she saw the landlady in what is called by her class "a great pucker."

"Oh, my lady," exclaimed the latter, "here's a dreadful thing ! She must be murdered ; for sure I am that nothing else would have kept her away from *me*, seeing that I made her so comfortable, and talked cheerful to her when she had got the hips, and took up her meals quite reg'lar, and made her take a glass or two of wine every day, which it come from 'The Mitre' where they has it pure and no adultery. She *must* be murdered ; for it don't stand feasible that any person would give up such comforts except they was dead."

"When did you miss her?" asked Lady Grace.

"The night afore last, my lady," replied

Mrs. Ribble, "when I never closed my blessed eyes till broad daylight."

"And what inquiries did you make?" pursued Lady Grace.

"Why, my lady, I went to every house in the Row, but nobody know'd nothing about her," answered Mrs. Ribble. "Oh, there's no trouble I wou'dn't take for poor dear Mrs. Sidney!"

"Then, as *you*, Mrs. Ribble, have failed," observed her ladyship, "I must take the matter in hand. But first, I should wish to inspect the box in her room. Something may perhaps be found there capable of throwing a light on the matter."

"Certainly, my lady," replied Mrs. Ribble, drawing herself up, "I've nothing to say agen it, for my conscience is clear. Not for all the world would I rummidge and transact her box, 'specially as it's locked, and there ain't no key."

“I am sure,” said Lady Grace, “that neither you nor I would, under ordinary circumstances, ransack a box, locked or unlocked, belonging to another person. But the present extremity will abundantly warrant such a proceeding; and I give you my authority, as a relation of Mrs. Sidney, to have the box forced in my presence.”

“There’s a carpenter next door,” said Mrs. Ribble, eagerly going out into the row.

On her return with the man, Lady Grace, followed by the two others, ascended to the absentee’s room, and the box, being opened, was found to be empty. The inference from this soothed the terror of Grace. It seemed to indicate that Clara’s departure was voluntary. Some motive—at present beyond her cousin’s conjecture—had induced the fugitive to leave her present residence. But why did she shroud her movements in such impenetrable secrecy?

In her heart, Grace resolutely refused to

admit any conjecture derogatory to Clara, in reference to Lord Sidney.

“No,” soliloquized she, “her looks, her repentant words, her fearful sufferings, all forbid the suspicion of a return to guilt. She must have another, and deeper, reason for wishing to be hidden from the gaze of any but total strangers. Why had she not courage to confide in me?”

Though this new surmise gained strength every time it crossed her mind, Grace would not pause in her investigation. She applied at her banker’s, and learned that Clara had drawn for the whole amount placed there to her credit. This only strengthened the former conclusion, namely, that the fugitive had secreted herself for a season, in order to avoid the prying eyes and conjectures of those who knew a little of, but not all, her history. In this belief Grace rested, waiting patiently for time to solve the mystery.

Simultaneously with Lady Grace's visit to the house of Mrs. Ribble, every kind of inquiry was prosecuted by Lord Clementsford and the Duke of Ellingfield as to the fate of Clara Delaunay. In addition to other investigations, they applied at the different police-stations, and learned that the night in question had been unusually peaceable, and that no casualty of any kind had been reported.

This fortified the "foregone conclusion" of Grace.

CHAPTER X.

CLARA'S MEETING WITH GREVILLE—HER
NARRATIVE.

TEN weeks elapsed since the time indicated by the preceding chapter. The Duke's party, with the exception of Greville, had returned to England many months previously.

At length Greville himself arrived from Spain. He reached London at a convenient period for the settlement of affairs connected with his profession, as well as for transacting business of a private nature.

He had been in town more than a fortnight (and even in that short sojourn he found our metropolis anything but a blissful residence), when a chance-meeting in the streets influenced very materially his plans.

Passing one day through the Burlington Arcade, and casually glancing into a lady's shoe-shop, he saw therein the *ci-devant* Mrs. Leicester.

His first impulse was to enter the shop and greet her. But, on a more deliberate survey, he was shocked to observe her care-worn face, on which were "written strange defeatures." A few months had done the work of many years. She looked haggard and laden with grief; and Greville's surprise at witnessing so melancholy a change, was increased by seeing that she was altered not only in person but in demeanour. Her manner to the shopman was meek and submissive, if not abject. In her attitude might be detected that miserable

deference of poverty—that forlorn subjection to another's will, which is one of the most affecting symptoms of want.

In addition to this, Greville could not fail to remark that her dress was in keeping with her demeanour—that is, it was unbecoming, ill-made, not scrupulously neat, and of the cheapest material.

These disastrous evidences withheld Greville from going into the shop. It might be that a meeting under such circumstances, and before the eyes of a third person, would have taxed Clara's self-control too severely. He therefore waited until her business should end, when he would offer to escort her home.

“Home!” That short syllable has a sound of long-enduring sweetness. It does not mean merely the roof which shelters us. Were that all, the fitter term would be “residence,” or “place of protection from the elements.” “Home” includes the sacred idea we all cherish

in our heart of hearts. It is the enchanted spot, haunted by love, which we regard as an oasis in the desert of life, where we passed the blessed hours of childhood, before belief in good was tortured by worldly deceit, and happiness exhausted by ceaseless ills. Let us, therefore, say that Greville intended to conduct Mrs. Leicester to her house, or her lodgings, but assuredly not to her home.

On issuing from the shop, Clara started with surprise and shame, when Greville accosted her ; but she felt that an attempt to evade him would subject her to worse constructions than any that could arise from a frank recognition. Under this conviction, she took the arm he proffered ; and while they walked towards the neighbourhood of Drury Lane, she revealed to his astonished ears a few details of her present destitution. She was once more acquainted with the features of Poverty—“*ghastly* Poverty,” as it is strongly characterised in one fearful

word by Gray, the poet. She told her companion that starvation—actual, hard, desperate starvation, was not far off; nay, had once been experienced. To repel its further approaches, had been the object of her visit to the shop in which Greville had seen her. She had applied there for work, and to offer for sale some worsted slippers she had made.

All this was sufficiently distressing; though Greville was doomed to listen to details still more harrowing.

But, as Clara herself remarked, the streets were not fit localities for such a confidence. Womanly pride had not deserted her; and she feared that a passer-by might overhear her conversation—might class her as one of the “well-spoken” mendicants who haunt the London thoroughfares—and interpret her gestures into a mere assumption of what they too truly indicated—despair.

The wretched lodgings were now reached;

the door was opened, and Clara invited her companion to walk up stairs to her room. The quick glance of Greville detected a sneering smile on the visage of the slip-shod female who answered the street-door bell. This was shocking and repellent to a man's experienced eye. Happily Mrs. Leicester was still too pure in mind to understand what that smile implied.

On entering the room, Clara at once broke the silence.

“Oh, Mr. Greville,” exclaimed she, “I am very, very wretched. But what must you think of me? I am so desperate, that it seems to my scared mind as if Providence had placed you in my path to receive my wretched history. From what I know of you, I cannot be too thankful that a recital of my misfortunes should be destined to so kind an ear.”

Greville now interrupted his companion, by begging she would not torment herself by un-

necessary details. These would not benefit *her*, but would distress *him*.

“ You shall hear *all*—at least all I can tell,” resumed she. “ Rumour has, perhaps, acquainted you that I quitted Spain in company with Lord Sidney Tresham. Yes, yes ! all the world said, of course, and you may now believe, as——as his mistress.”

A sudden and hysterical burst of tears interrupted her ; but she soon regained her self-possession.

“ Oh !” exclaimed she, “ what weakness is this for me—a beggar—to evince ! I must be calm. Tresham and I left Spain together, and arrived in England. The news of our separation from the travelling party (of which you were one) preceded us, and the tongue of censure was busy. Scarcely were we settled in London, when my father visited us. The poor old man came not to reproach ; but, with tears in his eyes, implored me to take refuge with

him. He even knelt at my feet, beseeching me to return to his house and protection, and to remember that I was still his daughter. All that a loving heart could dictate, did my affectionate parent then offer.

“ By earnest looks, though I spoke not, I appealed to Sidney; but his countenance was blank. No sign was at the moment given from which I could deduce his wish or intention. I conjured him to speak; and he said calmly, and almost solemnly, that he could offer no opposition to the plan proposed by my father. He thought it the wisest course; adding, that much as the struggle might cost him, he would consent to resign me. Still this language was accompanied by a glance of tenderness, which I interpreted into the words, *Do not abandon me.*

“ Under this impression, I turned a deaf ear to my father’s entreaties, and obstinately refused to listen to another syllable on the subject. My

father seemed disappointed and vexed ; but no expression of reproach passed his lips.

“ Mr. Greville,” continued she, dropping her voice to a whisper, “ I firmly believe that Lord Sidney was very much attached to me then. Nay, more, I begin to think it was all my own fault that he forsook me.”

“ What !” exclaimed Greville, “ did Tresham forsake *you* ? I rather hoped that mature reflection had induced you to forsake *him*.”

“ No,” replied Clara ; “ he has left me to starve, though he knew I had additional claims on him.”

Here another convulsive fit of sobbing stopped the recital.

After a brief interval, she recovered her self-possession, saying, “ I have anticipated the incidents of my narrative, and must now return to the regular order of events. After the interview with my father, Lord Sidney and I travelled about the country, and for a time all was

well. He was kind and affectionate to me. We heard that Mr. Leicester had taken legal steps to procure a divorce; and Sir George, my father, urged Tresham to vindicate my reputation, as far as possible, by marriage, provided my husband should succeed in divorcing me. He even stated the sum with which he would endow me. In short, it was settled that Lord Sidney and I were to be married.

“ In a brief space of time, however, I began to perceive a change in Sidney’s manner, which gradually became constrained and distant. He grew more and more cold towards me. therefore, was downcast and unhappy; hence arose murmuring and discontent between us, and he frequently left me for weeks together. At this period we lived in the country. I could not conjecture where he spent his time during his absence from me; and I abstained from inquiry, as I knew sufficiently of the world to

be aware that few men will bear cross-questioning.

“ What I could not ascertain for myself was, however, unintentionally conveyed to me through the medium of the servants, from whom it occasionally transpired that their master had arrived from Kew, where I discovered that he had taken a cottage, and was living with an actress, whom he had taken from the stage. My mortification, not to say agony, at being thus supplanted, inspired me with all the rage of a slighted woman. Envy and jealousy took entire possession of my heart, and passionate recriminations passed between Tresham and myself whenever we met. Fool that I was ! I might, perhaps, have won him back by kind words and tender looks ; but——”

Here Clara paused. After awhile, with a sudden effort, she exclaimed—

“ Mr. Greville, there are associations and feelings which, though vice is the origin of

them, are too sacred for detail. Let me pass them over.

“The blow came at last!” she continued, with a heavy sigh. “Yes, it came at last. During his final absence from me, I received a letter enclosing money. O, Mr. Greville, I had never before been so treated. But I suppose such gifts are thought necessary by men of the world who make presents to their *mistresses*.”

This last word was uttered with syllabic distinctness: to use a musical metaphor, it was *staccato'd* with sharp force.

A brief silence ensued, rendered more impressive by the loudness of the foregoing enunciation.

At length Greville said, “I beseech you, Mrs. Leicester, not to harass yourself by such bitter——”

“Let me finish, Mr. Greville,” interposed Clara, wildly. “I think I said that money was

offered to *me*! Money.—Yet, even in doing this, Tresham made some delicate pretence. He said it was to pay our debts contracted at the country-house in which, for a time, we had lived. He added, that ladies understood such matters better than men—that he should never inquire how I had disbursed it; and, indeed, made so many excuses for sending the amount, that my mind was attracted to the insult by the very apologies.”

Clara pressed her hand to her forehead as if the thought were torturing. Suddenly, however, she said, in a low voice, “I should be very glad of that sum *now*; but then I paid Tresham’s debts with it, though it was clear to me that he did not mean it to be so appropriated.”

“Did Tresham’s letter say no more?” asked Greville.

“O, yes,” replied Clara. “He stated that business of the most startling nature precluded

the possibility of his return to me ; that an abyss of difficulties had opened at his feet, which he must shun by his own individual energy. In no case, however, was I to think of seeking him. ‘But, indeed,’ added he, ‘I place much reliance on your disposition, which is not of a prying nature.’

“In that thought,” continued Clara, “Tresham did me justice, and I thank him. He acknowledged that although his manner of breaking off with me might appear abrupt, this letter must terminate our connection.

“Good God ! what were then my feelings ? I felt suddenly old, withered, trampled-on, deserted, broken down. The necessity, however, of action recalled my scattered senses. I could no longer continue in my then abode ; but, having discharged the rent, I left the house, not knowing where to turn. I was homeless, solitary, forsaken ; but I resolved, sooner or

later, to return to Tresham the money he had sent.

“In my misery I found an *asylum*—O, the wretchedness of that word!—in a mean row of houses near Regent Street, where my cousin Lady Grace Dalzell discovered me, and came to my aid, like a guardian angel, with liberal hand and words of consolation.”

Clara now related to Mr. Greville the incidents of this part of her story, with which our readers are already acquainted. She also told him of her visit to Paris, and her silent repulse by Tresham; adding that she had remained in France till her money was nearly exhausted, and that she had reached London almost penniless.

“To recount,” said she, “what has occurred since then, would weary you and agonize me. Suffice it briefly to mention that I came here in the hope of earning a living by working as a seamstress. But my endeavours have been

vain ; and a few weeks have found me—*us*, Mr. Greville (for another human being is now dependant on my individual exertions), on the brink of destitution and hunger !”

CHAPTER XI.

GREVILLE'S GENEROSITY—CLARA'S RENCONTRE
WITH HER SISTER THE DUCHESS OF EL-
LINGFIELD.

THERE is a time-hallowed saying, that some persons are born under an *unlucky star*; and the old astrologers, accepting this opinion, no less than its reverse, tried to reduce prophecy to a science, which might be mastered by patient observation of stellar aspects. Nativities were “cast,” and the events of a person’s life fore-

told, by discovering what planet was in the ascendant at the time of his birth. By such evidences, in connection with other celestial phenomena, it was ascertained whether the individual whose fate was under investigation, was to be fortunate or otherwise.

This seemed to be a ready way of accounting for the constant prosperity of some, and the constant misery of others. When reason cannot elucidate an apparent mystery, empiricism presumptuously demands an audience ; and thus it was promulgated that the planets were sole arbiters of good and evil : happiness depended on an auspicious conjunction of stars ; while wretchedness inevitably resulted from “the blast of an unfavourable planet.” There was no such agent as chance : everything was pre-ordained by the planets.

And, indeed, it is no wonder that men were inclined to such a belief ; seeing that numerous instances are common of unvarying human in-

felicity endured by many to whom no blame whatcver could be imputed: they might be virtuous, affectionate, pains-taking; but they were still victims of inexorable misfortune.

More than two centuries and a half ago, a certain Sir Christopher Heydon, knight, (one of the then countless professors of divination by appearances in the firmament), published in Cambridge an abstruse and almost interminable “*Defence of Judiciall Astrologie,*”

“ Now seldom pored on,”

in which he maintains that our several destinies in this life are dependent on the stars; and, in support of his assertion, quotes the doctrine of Origen (an ancient father of the Church), who declares “that the stars are so placed in heaven that, by their divers motions, aspects, and conjunctions, they signifie as well all universall, as *particular*, events. For which reason,” adds our astrologer, “Origen calleth heaven a booke,

in which God hath, as it were, inlymned* all that his pleasure is should come to passe in this world, not exempting the *actions of men.*” To enforce this opinion, Origen appeals to the narration of the patriarch Joseph, “which in Origen’s time was extant and of great authoritie, and in which Jacob tells his sonnes that he had read in the tables of Heaven whatsoever should befall them and their children.”

The above method of foretelling future events has been renounced by modern wisdom. Still it remains a mystery, why so many thoroughly good, honest, kind-hearted individuals, should invariably be pursued by ill fate from the cradle to the grave. The enigma is not solved by saying, “Yes, no one can deny their worthiness; but it is plain they were deficient in industry, foresight, prudence,” &c. This is only evading the question; for it may be asked, “*Why* were they thus deficient in qualities so vitally im-

* *i. e.*, pictured.

portant?" It is in difficulties such as these—which have a still wider existence—that we may detect the origin of judicial astrology.

This short digression has been made, because of the perpetual sufferings of poor Clara De-launay. How had she deserved them? Her temper was sweet; her heart was kind; she endured extreme calamity with meek resignation; hate could find no place in her breast; she believed in good, and, instead of resenting, pitied evil. In her conduct, when she was mistress of her own actions, she justified the angelical definition of Friendship given by Lady Winchelsea:—

“ ‘Tis to share all joy and grief;
‘Tis to lend all due relief
From the *tongue*, the *heart*, the *hand* ;
‘Tis to mortgage house and land ;
For a friend, be sold a slave :
‘Tis to *die upon a grave*,
If a friend therein do lie.”*

* Poems by Anne, Countess of Winchelsea, 1713.

Beautiful exceedingly, and most affecting, are these lines of the noble poetess.

Clara's heart was thoroughly capable of the sacrifice here indicated by the sweetest of all female writers of verse ; yet Clara was doomed to drink to its dregs the bitter cup of Adversity. Nothing but an unshakeable trust in the final benignity of the Supreme Disposer, can give us patience in the fearful and unaccountable trials of our transitory state.

Having, with painful interest, listened to a recital of Clara's woes, Greville said to her—

“ Why, under such distressing circumstances, did you not apply to your father ? ”

“ I could not do so,” answered she, “ after having, a few months previously, rejected, with a decision which I fear must have seemed peremptory, the kind overtures he made ; and I scarcely dared to see my father because, after my divorce from Mr. Leicester, I continued to

live with Tresham though he refused to fulfil his promise by marrying me."

"I admit," remarked Greville, "that what you mention presented an obstacle in that quarter. Still, your cousin, Lady Grace, remained your friend. Surely, you could have made your sufferings known to her."

"No! no!" exclaimed Clara, with sudden emphasis, as if the mere suggestion was agony. "I could never have summoned impudence enough—for I will not dignify such an action by the name of *courage*—to look my good, my inestimable cousin in the face. I had partaken liberally of her bounty—she had soothed my afflictions by gracious words and loving embraces—she sought me out in a squalid place, and sat with me in a wretched garret; and yet I treacherously concealed my movements from her, and used the money she had generously bestowed on me, by going abroad to see Tresham. My motives in doing this were prompted, as you have

already heard, by natural anxiety for my coming infant ; yet I cannot but feel that I was ungrateful and unfeeling in not acquainting her with my purpose. But how could I touch on such a theme to *her* ? How could I tell my cousin, who had been affianced to Tresham, that I was going to seek him in Paris ? I knew she had discarded him for ever ; but I also had good reason to surmise that her former engagement was still held in the tenderest recesses of her memory. No, no, I could not, after having been guilty of so monstrous a deceit, apply to Gracee.”

When Greville heard this, he grew pale and trembled with agitation. *He* also had sacred recollections of former love of which Grace was the idolised object — secret memorials which could never leave his heart.

Clara saw his perturbation, and was silent.

At length, Greville recovered sufficient composure to pursue his inquiries, and asked Clara

why, instead of taking her present forlorn-looking room in a neighbourhood haunted by violence and crime, she had not, on her return from abroad, repaired to her former lodging, where, according to what she had stated in her narrative, she was carefully attended, and where the woman of the house was authorised by Lady Grace to supply her with the comforts of life.

“Had I done so,” answered Clara, “my cousin would immediately have been apprised by Mrs. Ribble of my re-appearance; and a call from Grace would have inflicted on me the intolerable spasms of shame and confusion. I had been guilty of ingratitude. By concealment, which, in my case, was a mute falsehood, I had repelled a pure and loving heart; and I desperately felt that I must abide the consequences. So I came here—here to this den of utter misery.”

A pause ensued for a few minutes; and then,

as if some sudden recollection had occurred to her, Clara again spoke.

“In the whirl and confusion of my mind to-day, on meeting you, Mr. Greville, and when alluding to Lord Sidney Tresham’s present of money to me, I forgot to state that, in the midst of my want, I was able, by the assistance of a very humble friend—an old, pensioned servant who, during more than twenty years, had been housekeeper in our family—to return what had no doubt been insultingly offered as a *douceur*. Having thus borrowed the exact sum required, I inclosed it to Tresham, with my ‘compliments,’ but not another word, and left the letter directed to him at his club, for I knew no other direction.”

In Greville’s character, sympathy with the grief of others was a marked feature. He thought not of reproaching the poor sufferer with the imprudence, or even vice, had it been

such, which led to a torturing chastisement ; but he addressed his utmost energy to mitigate, if not wholly to remove, the dreadful consequences. From these, Clara Delaunay must, if possible, be saved. When he gazed at her worn-out clothes and wretched countenance, and heard the pitiable tones of her voice, he exulted on reflecting that her object out of doors that day was to procure work for the support of herself and infant. Her story was humiliating ; but her present life was praiseworthy.

Greville trembled, however, at the fear against which he could not altogether fortify his mind, that, possibly, this commendable disposition might give way under the strong pressure of want, the fearful corrupter, no less than stern teacher. Therefore he felt that mere sympathy and word-kindness, though always acceptable when given spontaneously, were not all the perishing victim required. Substantial relief—money and food—were needed.

It is a difficult and embarrassing affair at all times to tender pecuniary assistance; but when, as in the present case, the recipient is not of inferior birth to the donor, the act is almost impossible.

To offer as a loan the trifling sum he had about him (for Greville was not rich in purse) was his first thought; and, upon reflection, he did it. He would not wait for any reply; but with a promise of speedy communication with Clara, he took his departure.

The afflicted woman, holding in her hand the money just given to her, looked at her sleeping infant, and burst into tears. "I have been sorely tried," sobbed she; "but Heaven, in my utmost need, now, as hitherto, has sent a friend. O God," she ejaculated, dropping on her knees, "receive my thanks! 'A broken and a contrite heart, Thou wilt not despise.' "

On the next day, Greville did not fail to fulfil his promise. He wrote to Clara, saying

he earnestly hoped that a plan formed by him would meet her approbation. He told her that, being compelled to remain some time in town, he had taken lodgings for a specified period in the house of a friend of his family, where there was a very kind and discreet mistress ; adding, that he had more rooms than he could desire or occupy ; and that if Mrs. Delaunay would oblige him by accepting refuge there, she would have female society of the most attentive kind. He concluded by assuring her that no unwelcome curiosity would, in any instance, be manifested.

This was all Greville said. He made no allusion to the peculiarity of Clara's residing in the lodgings of a single man. The fact that she would be in the midst of respectable female society justified the step ; and Clara accepted the kind and wise offer with heart-felt gratitude.

After settling with her coarse and brutal landlady, who was unfavourably contrasted even

with Mrs. Ribble, Clara betook herself, with the few remaining articles of her wardrobe, to Henry Greville's lodgings.

To those who, happily, have never learned the fearful lessons of Adversity, it may, perhaps, seem strange that, with an already tarnished character, Clara should so far have braved the opinion of what is called "the world" as to accept protection in the house where Greville resided, and to live there at his expense. But over-delicacy in extreme distress is not only a superfluous virtue, but, in making us accessory to our own destruction, may, by strict casuists, be placed in the category of sins.

It may also excite surprise that the forsaken-one, when hard pressed by penury, did not appeal for relief to her own sister, who rolled in wealth. She might have done so, had not her meeting with so true and commiserating a friend as Henry Greville rendered the attempt unnecessary. Besides, she had already learned

that if indigence had a tendency to deprave the heart, affluence, in some instances, led to a similar result, and blunted, if not destroyed, the kindly affections. Lady Grace, indeed, with her abundant humanity, was secure against this kind of vitiation ; but few can withstand the demoralising influence of riches.

Nevertheless, but for the succour now held out to her, desperation might have forced Clara to run the risk of a humiliating repulse ; for it is always humiliating to lay our miseries at the feet of a prosperous member of one's own family, and thus encounter mortifying contrasts and excite poignant reflections.

But Clara had weightier objections than the reluctance of pride, to deter her from supplicating assistance from the hands of the Duchess.

One day, with pale and haggard looks, and wearing humble—not to say poverty-stricken—garments, she was dragging her weary limbs to

the hovel where she was compelled to shelter herself, when she encountered her sister's carriage standing at the door of a shop in Regent Street among several other fashionable vehicles, but, in show and *éclat*, surpassing them all. The Duchess was most richly and becomingly dressed: she appeared to be in the full bloom of health; and, in her carriage, sat an elderly lady of a somewhat stiff and haughty demeanour. Her Grace was engaged in scanning some memoranda in a book of tablets, when, on suddenly lifting her eyes, they met the gaze of her famishing sister.

The effect on the two relatives of those reciprocal glances, was as widely contrasted as their situation and appearance. In one, was exhibited the luxury arising from lavish expenditure. The other, presented a concentration of all that poverty could effect in depressing a human being. One looked almost regal: the other might have been taken for a mendicant.

Yet had an observer been present, skilled in the latent evidences of character—a poet, a painter, or a sculptor, for example—he would not have drawn a depreciating inference from the humility of one sister, nor elevated into grandeur of soul the proud glance of the other.

On the instant of recognition, a sudden rush of blood suffused the cheeks and neck of the Duchess ; and her eyes were rapidly lowered to the book she held in her hand, without one further manifestation of notice.

Clara, on the contrary, turned deadly pale—stopped short, and seemed transfixed as though she had been confronted by the deadly glare of a basilisk. And not until her jostled frame had made her sensible of being in the way by encumbering the path, did she become aware of aught around her, except that blush of shame by which alone the Duchess had betrayed the fact that she had seen and knew her sister.

Thus repulsed, Clara moved on without turning her head.

The English nation are proverbial for prejudice ; especially those fashionable slaves who have not one idea beyond the aim of being worshipped—not indeed for intellectual attainments, or pious virtues—but for the power of indulging in empty and ridiculous shows and ceremonies, and of giving pompous banquets and other costly *fêtes*. Even in the hallowed circle of home, they will not scruple to outrage the purest and most natural feelings rather than forego one moment of vain display.

Thus it was with the Duchess of Ellingfield. Considerations for her sister, even if such for a moment crossed her mind, weighed as nothing against her own pride. Still, it is just possible that a more charitable interpretation might be found for the callous act of that personage towards her forlorn relative. It might be that she wished to spare Clara the pangs of a public

recognition in the plight to which the latter was now reduced. But, as her Grace knew not where to find her sister, she might, under such affecting circumstances, have alighted from her carriage—drawn Clara aside, and ascertained where relief could be sent to her. Still, months passed and no sign of interest in the behalf of one so near to her in blood was evinced by the Duchess.

Since that time, the sisters had never met.

CHAPTER XII.

ENGLISHMEN ABROAD — A RUSTIC COTTAGE
—THE OLD NURSE—CLARA'S LETTER TO
HER.

SUCH of our countrymen as may not often have left their native land, and those of a certain set who entertain false views and superficial appreciations arising from a fashionable education—display to foreigners much of the ridiculous prejudice and intolerance attributed to our nation. At home, that little knot of a few hundred have so egregious an estimation of

themselves and their own importance, as to imagine that millions are but as a drop in the ocean compared to them ; and, when abroad, expect the continental peoples to acknowledge their inferiority to “ John Bull.”

Should their “ judgment ” be called into play, our Britons are apt to rush into one of two extremes, videlicet, either to grumble, despise, and abuse those unfavoured ones who are so foolish as to inhabit and love their own country, whose *fêtes* or dinners are designated “ miserable failures,” not worthy of comparison with those of Lady Stickinton or my Lord Beef ; while foreign public amusements, dramas, and musical performances, are voted tame, incorrect, and worthless—or, on the other hand, like Captain Booble or Sir James Slanger, affect a thorough ignorance of England and the English. “ The women,” they say, “ may be pretty ; but what toilettes ! ” The men are pronounced “ mere boors,” “ door-way blockers,”

&c. Art, with us, is characterised as a “dead letter,” and, because these travellers have been so favoured as to be introduced to Signor Intaglio or Monsieur Crayon, they think themselves superlative connoisseurs and accomplished artists.

But, if a few such characters may be found in our crowds, Old England can boast among her offspring many of sincere and sterling worth. Let us turn to one of these, whose unaffected virtues would atone for the heartlessness and foppery which throng the *beau monde*. It must, however, be admitted, that in all ranks and conditions of men, and in every part of the globe, there is as much variety of character as in the climates they respectively inhabit.

If “distance lends enchantment to the view” in the contemplation of many objects, so, on the contrary, a close and intimate acquaintance is necessary to estimate the comforts of an English cottage placed in a spot far from any

town, and nursing its own silence, undisturbed except by the lowing of kine, the chirping of birds, the trickling of rivulets, or the whispering of leaves. Its situation should overlook

“ Woods and lawns and lakes between,
Fields of corn and hedges green ;
Fallow grounds of tawny hue,
Distant hills, and mountains blue,
On whose ridge far off appears
A wood (the growth of many years)
Of awful oak, or gloomy pine,
Above the horizon’s level line,
Rising black.”

But no description can increase one’s interest in the humble reality : neither poet nor painter can add much to such a scene. It might with truth be said that the charm is peculiarly English ; for the sympathies of our neighbours across the channel are almost exclusively metropolitan.

How well, for example, do the French know the value of their animated pictures of the

transports of Parisian life ! With what false brilliance do they sometimes illustrate felicities which have no reality, or depict pleasures that cannot be experienced without repentance and disgust ! Yes, truly, they have the enchanting art of creating sentimental and moral grisettes, and disinterested patriots.

Few, indeed, of our nomadic countrymen are really insensible to the poetry of the home-scene we have just alluded to. When buffetting at sea with the stormy waves, or casting themselves on the ground after a long day's toil across a rocky desart, or musing in the hot twilight of an eastern sky, should their thoughts fly back to their own dear land, do they dream of the gorgeous palaces and turreted castles of England ? or of the humble cottage, with its curling smoke, and woodbined porch near some verdant elm-shaded lane outside the walled demesne ?

To such a spot, then, as the latter, let us conduct the reader.

The hollyhock in full bloom—the beehive—the rosy-fruited tree—the trellised porch—in short, every accessory to the peaceful dwelling is there. Nothing is wanting to complete the charm of stillness and repose and humble beauty.

But in most houses, whether high or low, a human being is generally found ; and there is one in the cottage before us—a woman of priceless value—the possessor of an honest, faithful English heart.

We look in and behold an elderly female of the middle sphere of life. Her spectacled eyes are strained on a large, open book—the Book which alone affords everlasting consolation to every sorrow.

Mrs. Gellscrust (for such is the singular name of the cottager) is reading the book given to her, as a parting gift, by her beloved mistress, Lady Delaunay, mother of hapless Clara. On the chimney-piece are objects which, though seldom seen in cottages, are familiar to those of

a higher station in life than the occupant of the cottage just described. Among them are several trifles betokening refined taste ; and there is one red-morocco case, richly gilded, and bearing the words, “ A gift from Clara.”

Mrs. Gellscrust is on the eve of a journey. A packed, but open portmanteau gives evidence of this unusual proceeding ; and a little maid is making other preparations for a great event. In fact, Mrs. Gellscrust is going to-morrow to London. This, though a formidable enterprise for our sequestered cottager, was one which she was resolved to achieve. No perils, however great and manifold, should deter her. She would have travelled to the other end of the world with such a motive as then animated her.

Upon the table lies an open letter. Mrs. Gellscrust’s eyes are occasionally raised from her book to give directions to the small maid, who is now preparing to retire, for she closes the

portmanteau, makes a rapid dip of her little body by way of curtsey, and vanishes.

The matron seemed not to have heeded the girl's exit; for she continues her perusal of the sacred volume, until the chapter she was reading came to a close. She then offered up a silent prayer.

“And now,” said she, aloud, “that I have sought and found strength, I may venture again to look at that letter. Oh, my dear child! how glad shall I feel to behold once more your beloved face!”

Tears stole down those aged cheeks, smooth in their serene charity, as she slowly opened the letter, of which the purport ran as follows:

“M—— Street, Bloomsbury, Nov. 1847.

“MY DEAR MARTHA,

“You must, I fear, have been surprised that the money I borrowed from you many months ago has not been returned before now,

But, my kind nurse, I know you will believe me when I tell you that necessity alone has caused the delay. The same motive that impelled me to apply to you on that occasion, namely, a sincere trust in your faithfulness, as well as a certain knowledge that the loss of that sum for a period would not be very material to you, prompts me to mention that I am still more incapable at the present moment of repaying you.

“ I cannot tell you all, Martha, but I have suffered much lately. I have not found so many friends in the world with which I formerly mingled, as to turn my affections away from the faithful guardian of my youth.

“ I will not write you a long letter, because I know your love requires no exhortation. I yearn to see you ; and I pray that if, without serious trouble to yourself, you can manage to come and see me in London, you will bless me by doing so at once, for I sadly need the assistance of a female friend, and I know not to

whom I can apply except yourself. I know the distance is great ; I also am aware that to one of your age, travelling so far is laborious ; and did I not require you with earnest longing, I would not permit myself to put you to so great a personal fatigue.

“ Come, if you can, in God’s name.

“ Your ever attached,

“ CLARA.”

Tears rolled thick and fast down her cheeks, as Mrs. Gellscrust finished the re perusal of Clara’s letter.

“ Yes, my dear, good girl,” soliloquized she, “ you are right in placing trust in my faithfulness. You are the child of my affections. All I have is yours. Poor dear ! You are not happy, I am sure. But how can you be so distressed ? You are in London, and your sister, the Duchess, is there too. But it is plain they are not together, strange as it may seem. Ah, Mary was not like

my Clara : the heart was never the same. Bless me ! I fear I must be very old, for I cannot remember what foreign parts she went to without Mr. Leicester. What can it all mean ? Sure Mr. Leicester had no house in Bloomsbury. Oh no ; he was always somewhere in Marylebone, which, they say, is at the other end of the town. Why, then, is my Clara away from her husband ? It is very strange, but time will unravel all."

Clara's letter was dated from Mr. Greville's lodgings, from which, though she was treated with kindness and attentive respect, she thought it, on every account, desirable to remove.

CHAPTER XIII.

A RETROSPECT.

MRS. GELLSCRUST had served in the Delaunay family nearly thirty years. She must have been very young when she first entered it ; but even then, she commanded a certain degree of respect, and after the marriage of Sir George, she soon appeared to take her place as head of the domestics in his establishment, irrespective of her nominal capacity.

Her first duties in Sir George's family were

to superintend his children. Afterwards, she became cook ; and her services were terminated as housekeeper—a situation which she held many years. She never married.

But of all her various posts in the household, not one was more assiduously discharged, or was so congenial to her own inclination as the tendance on, and rearing of, Clara. To this child Mrs. Gellscrust always manifested a preference, shown in various trifling, though conclusive, ways. But as her charge increased in years and beauty, the nurse's love mounted almost to adoration. Never would she tolerate a single unkind word against Clara ; nor did she believe in the possibility of her darling committing harm. Yet she could be strict enough with her when alone together. Mrs. Gellscrust then not only gave her young lady much valuable advice, but, if any occasion demanded reproof, Clara was sharply admonished.

The other sister, Mary (now Duchess of

Ellingfield), did not, somehow or other, attract Mrs. Gellsrust's fancy. She, nevertheless, discharged her duty towards Mary with undeviating exactness; though her heart was not excited by her as by Clara. And Clara unaffectedly reciprocated nurse's love.

To record consecutively the various years of servitude passed by this invaluable woman in the Delaunay family, would be merely unfolding one long tissue of faithfulness and anxious care. It may, however, be remarked that, by her vigilance in many ways, she had been of the greatest service to her present master and mistress when they were compelled to practise a rigid economy.

Time flew on, and years of devotion were but sadly requited, when the marriage of Clara to Mr. Leicester was first discussed.

As Mrs. Gellsrust advanced in years, a perfect confidence was established between her and Lady Delaunay, to whom she said exactly

what she thought. She strenuously opposed Clara's marriage, telling her mother she feared it could not be a happy one. She thought Mr. Leicester was not a man calculated to become a husband who would harmonize with her young lady ; neither did she believe that Clara had given him her heart.

“ Now look at her, my lady,” said Mrs. Gellscrust, “ and tell me if it is not throwing her away to give her to such a man ?”

Lady Delaunay, ever timid and yielding, offered very faint opposition to the opinion of her servant. In truth, though she could not openly avow it (especially as some preliminary arrangements had been settled), she regarded with aversion the engagement into which her daughter had been betrayed.

But her husband's will was her law. Even Mrs. Gellscrust silently acquiesced in the sacrifice, on its being frankly confessed to her that the approaching marriage was the only means

of rescuing the family from a most distressing pecuniary *imbroglio*. Furthermore, when the old dependant was assured that Clara voluntarily undertook the alliance, and, indeed, earnestly desired it, she never ventured to renew her remonstrances against the step.

Soon after the wedding, as is already known, the pecuniary affairs of Sir George mended, and Mary went to Lady Clementsford.

There now appeared no farther occasion for the presence of Mrs. Gellscrust in the almost deserted “Hall ;” and with tears she mentioned this to my Lady. At first, her departure was, of course, opposed. Yet, after repeated demands, Lady Delaunay saw reason in the request. The old servant’s age and failing health demonstrated her incapacity to manage the already rather disorderly establishment, which was seldom graced by the presence of its master.

Sir George’s frequent and unexplained absence from home gave rise to dissensions between

him and Lady Delaunay. These led to estrangement ; and before the lapse of much time, the couple, though their union had lasted many years, mutually agreed to separate. About the same period, her Ladyship lost another companion in the person of Mrs. Gellscrust, on whom her mistress was able to settle fifty pounds per annum, besides purchasing for her the cottage near the village of Dalebrook, to which allusion has already been made, and where the good old soul now resided.

The females of the Delaunay family occasionally corresponded with their aged house-keeper. But of late, Mrs. Leicester had not written to her. She departed for Spain without one word of farewell to Mrs. Gellscrust, who only heard of that event from some casual remark during a visit paid her by Lady Delaunay. Indeed, until our recluse received the letter from Clara requesting a loan, she was quite in the dark as to the proceedings and

fate of her “beloved girl,” as she always called her.

The voice of scandal had not reached the quiet village of Dalebrook; and Clara’s request for pecuniary aid—although a rather startling circumstance—was not much reflected on. It was sufficient for her faithful guardian that one on whom she doated, had asked a favour, which the old housekeeper was delighted to grant, without putting questions to any person whatever, or confiding what she had done to a single human being.

An interval of many months elapsed before Mrs. Gellscrust received the second epistle from Clara, which decided her movements as promptly as the former had caused her remittance of funds. But even on the present occasion, she did not forget—good, providential soul!—to draw a tolerably large amount from the village savings’ bank, as she knew the absolute necessity of money for her own use, as well as the pro-

bable service it might confer on one ten times dearer to her than herself.

The importance of this kind of aid is often much more keenly felt by individuals in the old housekeeper's class of life, and, one may add, more delicately offered to those in distress, than by a superior set, who bandy about the words "friend" and "friendship," without any sense of the sacred meaning inherent in those expressions.

CHAPTER XIV.

TRESHAM'S HEARTLESSNESS—THE DUCHESS OF
ELLINGFIELD AT A ROYAL REVIEW—UN-
EXPECTED MEETINGS THERE.

WITH Tresham's French ideas, French education, and French books as guides in the journey of life, it was not in the least probable that he would feel much compunction as to the bewildering dilemma in which Clara was placed after his and her return from Spain. Tresham was habitually accustomed to sneer at all good and with marvellous effrontery, to vindicate all

evil. He aimed at creating what is called “a sensation,” and was ambitious to startle the uninitiated aspirants of “the circles,” little anticipating, or perhaps not having sense to foresee, that he would eventually become the ridicule and scorn of the very novices he despised, and yet aimed to edify.

It must, however, be admitted that, in advocating evil, it is very doubtful if he was quite sincere. When, indeed, was he sincere, except in self-adulation and self-indulgence?

With all our follies and profligacies, there still exists in England—thank Heaven!—so stern a determination, among all classes, to discountenance vice, that even the most abandoned are sometimes compelled to veil their abandonment. Tresham felt this truth before he and Mrs. Leicester had been many months in their own country. His unmanly refusal to marry her who had sacrificed all for him, roused the anger and sharpened the rebukes of those among the

sober members of his acquaintance who were cognizant of the fact, and drove him to the society of his less scrupulous friends at the gaming-table.

This led to frequent visits to London and the clubs; and Tresham very soon began to feel that the expensive and ambiguous position with respect to Clara Leicester in which he was placed, was irksome in the extreme.

A consciousness of this, did not render his residence with her more enlivening; and repeated losses at play convinced him that the present connection could not last very long, and that he himself must take some steps to recover his position in society. About this time he formed an acquaintance with the so-called Mademoiselle Priscille. With her he might more safely amuse his vacant hours. To live with an actress, was a minor evil: it was but a venial imprudence, touching which the world consents to be tolerant.

His manner to Clara now became more harsh —his conduct more unfeeling. Her tears and despair as the final scene approached, had not the slightest effect on him, though the mode he adopted to break off with her was, perhaps, as delicate as his heartless nature was capable of suggesting ; videlicet, by writing her a farewell epistle, and, as we have seen, sending money to her. To do this latter, entangled him in the toils of usurers.

And thus, as he thought, terminated this romantic episode of his life.

But in what a position did it leave him in the world he was so anxious to conciliate ! The respectable portion of his friends looked very coolly upon him. It was not, however, this unfavourable aspect that disquieted him. His debts were a more direct annoyance ; and so pestered was he by duns, that, in a month or two, he had no choice but to get rid of Priscille and fly to Paris.

How he spent his time there we have already seen ; and also how he was beset by the Columbine, and appealed to by the heart-broken and deserted mother of his child. His proceedings in Paris exposed him to much risk, especially after Priscille, to glut her revenge, had denounced him. It is a wonder that he made his escape without a visit to Sainte Pélagie, a destination which would have presented a kind of *dramatic* consistency ; for, as his accuser belonged to the stage, an incarceration in a prison of which the name is derived from an actress,* must have fulfilled every demand for theatrical coherence.

Tresham, however, arrived safely back in London.

Though he brought with him a tolerably good amount of cash, he knew that it would probably soon be exhausted, and therefore he began se-

* The name of this gaol originates in Pélagie, an actress of the city of Antioch, who becoming a penitent in the fifth century, received the honours of saintship.

riously to recur to his favourite scheme of marriage. The large possessions of Grace Dalzell would set all to rights ; though, after his interview with her previously to his flight to France, he could not dare, with all his effrontery, to call on her again.

It was his constant hope that some day he might have a chance-meeting with Lord Clementsford and his daughter. But this was an improbable event, as they seldom mingled with society ; nor would he even have known they were in town, had not a royal review taken place at Woolwich in honour of the King of * * *. "All the world was present at the grand display," and, amongst others, the Duchess of Ellingtonfield.

Her Grace's carriage was not in a very prominent position. The front rank had been inviolably kept for the Royal suite ; and the horses of all parties were taken from the equi-pages. No distinction was made. That to

which royalty so graciously submitted, was, of course, endured without a murmur by her Grace, who, however, found herself in unenviable juxtaposition with what she termed “some of the female Osagees of that detestable garrison.”

Indeed, the foremost “savage” had indulged in a furious altercation with the nearest amazon —a very emaciated, sharp-featured female in black satin and feathers. This latter, being on her own ground, insisted that her one-horse “shay” should be pushed as much forward as the limits of safety permitted ; and, by dint of long experience in military affairs, she compelled the soldiers to put their shoulders to the wheels. These men, accustomed to commands, mechanically obeyed those of the wife of one of their commanders.

This movement excited the pique of the aristocratic personages in the next carriage ; for the new position taken up by the one-horse “shay,” considerably interfered with any view of the mi-

litary manœuvres. Mere rank was overlooked in favour of connections of the officers on duty.

The vehicle thus eclipsed was a green britzka emblazoned only by a Duke's coronet, and containing two ladies—the Duchess, and the Viscountess Smart.

“I say,” exclaimed her Grace, in no very pleasant tone, and attracting the attention of the crowd, as well as bringing up the official—“I say, will you get my carriage wheeled up to the front there ?”

“I am sorry, ma'am,” replied the policeman, “that our orders are positive on this head ; and that no carriages can be allowed to advance on account of the royal equipages.”

“But surely,” retorted the Duchess, “I have a right to have my carriage as far up as that woman's there,” pointing to the female soldier.

“Positively, ma'am,” rejoined the constable, “my orders must not be disobeyed.”

“O, don't *ma'am* me,” ejaculated her Grace.

“I am the Duchess of Ellingfield, and I think I have more right than——”

But the man interrupted the flow of her oratory by observing, in the most polite tone of London complaisance, which did great honour to his cockney breeding, “Really, Duchess, we cannot interfere here. The orders are all military.”

This last triumphant check produced an audible laugh from the heroine in black satin and feathers, who cried out, addressing a military man, “Will you send for Captain B., in order that I may have *my* carriage” (great emphasis laid on the word *my*) “wheeled up a little more forward?”

The dashing bravado of this demand was too much for the Duchess’s temper; and, having exchanged a glance of mortified wonder with the other lady seated with her, she exclaimed,—

“I think, madam, I have quite as much right——”

But suddenly checking herself, she addressed her companion in an audible whisper, observing, “Luckily, it is only a one horse *shay*, and we can see over it.”

Then, looking towards the other amazon, and improvising a title for her, the Duchess said aloud, “I suppose Lady Sale and her rival are going to charge. *O mon Dieu ! Quelle femme ! elle n'aura jamais le courage de retirer. Ou de se retirer ?*”

The so-called Lady Sale, however, succeeded in her object, whereas the Duchess failed.

This little scene had not the effect of calming her Grace, though, after her burst of indignation, she maintained a haughty silence.

She was standing up in her carriage to see the horse artillery, which, after marching past, had rapidly charged and limbered to, and a murmur of approbation ran among the regal spectators—when two gentlemen—one in uniform—rode up to salute her.

The *militaire*, who was a well-known gallant, and quite a *renommée* in the world, addressed the Duchess, whose head was momentarily turned away. His opening salutation arrested her eager notice, and, in replying to it, a sudden flush mounted to her temples.

“Is not this very pretty?” asked he.

“Yes,” answered her Grace, “as much as I can see of it through Lady Sale.” And she and the Viscountess indulged in a forced laugh, while the colour remained crimsoning her face.

“Oh, is Lady Sale here?” asked the officer, sharply looking to the front, though he had never before heard of such a person.

As he removed his gaze from the Duchess, the flush of her countenance retired gradually.

Then, once more addressing her Grace, he gave a slight explanation of the scene, and galloped away. The acting “Lady Sale” was perhaps somewhat appeased by seeing any-

thing military in connection with her former assailant.

The other gentleman now advanced.

“ Oh, is that you, Lord Sidney ?” exclaimed the Duchess ; “ how are you ? What a time it is since I have met you ! Haye you just returned from Paris ?”

She appeared acquainted,—nay, familiar,—with all his movements. Several sentences passed between her and the other lady, while Tresham took up his position by the carriage.

At length, her Grace said to Lord Sidney, “ I must positively now wish you *bon jour !* adieu ! *au revoir !* anything, in short, to get rid of you.” Then, lowering her voice, and leaning down to him, she added, “ For I see Lord Clementsford and Grace Dalzell looking at us.”

Tresham instantly gazed towards the spot indicated by the Duchess ; and there, indeed, he perceived a veteran officer in Hussar uniform on the field close to the Staff, accompanied by a

lady, dressed in a tightly-fitting black habit. A round hat, with sombre-tinted feathers, and a small black veil, completed her costume.

The deep mourning set off to great advantage the form and dignified countenance of Lady Grace Dalzell. But she was very pale and much thinner than when Tresham had last seen her in that, to him, memorable interview. He could not, however, cease to admire her.

As Lord Clementsford thought it his duty to attend the King officially, Grace accompanied her father to this military spectacle. Her eyes, indeed, were apparently turned towards the Duchess's carriage, but her features betrayed no emotion ; and no one could discern in such a crowd what those eyes were gazing at.

The above detail has been given minutely, for the incidents did not pass without observation. The remarkable blush of the Duchess on being suddenly accosted by her military friend who had ridden up to her, had not been thrown

away on the Viscountess, nor on a spectator not far distant, who had been much struck with it.

Leaning against a carriage in so absorbed and abstracted a mood as not to perceive that his coat was soiled with mud and his hat not improved by a few previous showers on that pitiless common, stood Henry Greville. His dress was not likely to set him off ; yet never did he look to greater advantage. So unobservant was he of all save one object, that he saw little of what was going on, until the two before-mentioned horsemen passed so near him that he was induced to follow their movements with his eyes. As their destination was near at hand, Greville could easily witness what passed, and he could not avoid noticing the sudden flush which reddened the throat and face of the Duchess. What could this betoken ? He noted it involuntarily, and it forced itself upon his thoughts and memory. The peculiar position in which he

was placed towards the parties concerned, gave strength to his observation.

Tresham, who had speedily retired from her Grace's carriage, now, for the first time on the present occasion, beheld Greville leaning, in his reverie, against the wheel; and then, as the former observed the noble features before him, he mentally exclaimed, "Well, that is just the face a woman would admire!"

But soon the disordered state of Greville's attire afforded a more congenial impulse to his mind—that of ridicule.

CHAPTER XV.

VEXATIONS OF THE DUCHESS.

THE Duchess of Ellingfield, ambitious of fame in the realms of fashion, continues her way floundering in meshes of her own weaving. She forgets that pleasure and happiness are not often found in the high roads of life thronged by countless competitors for the prize; but that what we have been so long pursuing with our eyes wide open, may at last be secured when, worn out by frequent and vain efforts, we stum-

ble in darkness on the reward so long and so ardently coveted.

Success in fashionable circles may be very gratifying, if obtained. But who obtains it? Reverses are the more common fate; and these are harassing and mortifying to a proud heart.

It has been beautifully said (by Miss Martineau, I think), and the experience of every day confirms the assertion, that Omnipotence has so constructed us that, in looking back, we seldom remember the miseries, but vividly recal the happy incidents of our existence. The shadows are made too dark for our visual powers; but the lights maintain their original brightness. This is the merciful ordination of One who has counterbalanced inevitable suffering by a faint foretaste of eternal felicity.

Not, however, in worldly frivolity is this foretaste enjoyed. And so did the Duchess of Ellingfield find. She took the wrong course—a course which involved her in frequent and humili-

liating disappointment. Apparently, what did she *not* possess? She could exult in rank, wealth, youth, beauty, talent,—all that we can imagine to be the “golden apples” coveted by votaries of fashion. But her cravings were not satisfied. Outwardly, indeed, she assumed the dignified state of a peeress of the highest rank; she was as lofty and overbearing as could be required by the most slavish worshipper of aristocracy. Still, she was unsatisfied.

From what, then, did her inward restlessness proceed? It was not from the Duke’s age, for as she possessed the Duke’s rank, her ambition in that respect was tolerably satisfied. Perhaps she would *now* prefer some continental royalty. True, a duke had formerly never been dreamt of in her most sanguine hours. Her repinings did not arise from the misfortunes of her good mother and her frail sister, for she thought very little of what did not personally concern herself. No anxiety was caused by her children, who

were as healthy and graceful as any duke's progeny could be. She was not deficient in personal attraction or artificial decoration to set off her beauty. Her dress-makers, parasites, and French maids, pronounced her to be—and she believed them—absolute perfection.

To what, then, could her dissatisfaction be attributed? Why, from “hope deferred.” She followed, with eyes wide open, the high and broad road. Her carriages were elaborate and grand, though perhaps not in strictly correct taste. More heraldic emblazonment was displayed on them than on any in London. Besides, she had vehicles for every exigency; her chariot for wet weather; her britzka when fine; a brougham for Sunday; not to mention other possible and impossible whirlabouts. Her footmen were the tallest of Belgravian Patagonians; for it would not be easy to reckon how many Mercuries had been thrown back upon Olympus for want of inches. Her dress, in an over-

charged age, was unapproachable, unimaginable, and unaccountable. It was an eighth wonder how such profuse ornament could manage to exist on that tiny article which facetious *modistes* term a bonnet.

It had been asked by a spiteful little Viscountess, who had once been the Duchess's bosom-friend (if such is the term for Vanity-fair linkings-together), "How, indeed, could dear Ellingfield's carriages be in good taste when she is the first duchess in her family? The cultivation of strawberries, to be sure, was carefully attended to by her paternal ancestors. Still their *leaves* had not been so much studied. So how could she, poor thing! know that to display strawberry-leaves here, there, above, below, behind, and everywhere, was not the thing?"

The sarcastic little woman omitted to add that, in her own family, a viscountess's pearls had never been heard of except in the old story.

The same authority had once whispered to Bob Blazer—the Honourable Bob Blazer of the Blues, I mean—at a party, “Here comes her blowsy Grace.” Bob Blazer’s moustachios were so large and black that they covered his smile; but next day they did not close his lips and tongue, and “her blowsy Grace” was heard of in more than a dozen circles. This latter effusion occurred soon after a slight altercation had taken place between the charming Duchess and amiable Viscountess.

What was it, we repeat, that her Grace did not find in the broad road? German princes were not so numerous, perhaps, as she desired, though in that particular she was no worse off than her neighbours. Royalty had dined with her; but a vague rumour floated about that *she* had never dined with our royalty. She had been commanded to attend at Court with the rest of the crowd, but to the select circle she had not yet been admitted.

It had been observed that large as she was, and strong-minded to boot, royalty omitted to take the same notice of her Grace on a particular occasion, that was bestowed on others of similar rank in a compass where, by virtue of ze, she must have been perceived. Her “strong-mindedness” did not prevent her from shedding tears of gall at the infliction of this marked neglect.

It cannot, however, be denied, that the petty German princes paid her many compliments, though they rather bored her about quarterings, &c. ; and were so malicious as to record how a certain English lady (married abroad) did not receive the position she expected because her grandmother had been, in some way, connected with trade.

With all her seeming advantages, the Duchess pined after *creating* “a set,” instead of only being *in* “a set.” Even the “set” which included her, was decidedly not the best ; though

had it been "*her* set," it would have passed. It must, however, be confessed, that she had failed to get into some *recherché* "sets." The old-fashioned Lady N., who never went to Court, but had a *set* of literati at her old-fashioned house in St. James's Square, made her visit with painful punctuality in return to the call of her Grace; and although she could not refuse to accept the first peaches regularly and annually sent by the Duchess, Lady N. as regularly, when her own arrived from Rococo Lodge—perhaps three weeks later—returned the present. But notwithstanding these reciprocal courtesies, season after season passed without her Grace meeting the literati in St. James's Square.

This, as the clown in Shakespeare says, was "very *tolerable*, and not to be endured."

The Duchess of Darkcorners also was very alert in formal visit paying, and she invited her 'blowsy Grace' to one dinner party a season,

in return for a “to meet H.R.H.” but no one could say that *our* Duchess was of that “set.”

Then Lady B. and Lady C. had decidedly their own “sets,” in which the Duchess of Ellingfield was occasionally tolerated, though she was not identified with either.

Upon one occasion her Grace so far forgot herself as to be seen at the Opera with Mrs D.—plain Mrs. D.—not plain in face, for she was an earthly Venus, but plain in *name*. As if so rash an act were not sufficiently perilous, our Duchess took this lady home to supper, in the hope of making her beauty, wit, and money instrumental in the formation of a “set,” which, at one time, her Grace determined to realize. True, *en revanche*, she cut her dead next week in the lobby at the Opera, because she had overheard the before-mentioned little Viscountess whisper, rather loudly for a whisper, “Now, really, if dear Elly does such things as to be seen arm in arm with that vulgar Mrs. D. and

her diamonds, she will be utterly lost. It is too great a *solecism* even for her to commit."

The Viscountess was not very accurate in knowledge as to the meaning of words. She, moreover always used affectionate diminutives, such as "dear Elly," when saying the most caustic things about her Grace.

This trifling incident will tend to show how the Duchess struggled on, always with hope, on the broad road. No success, however, had yet smiled on her, for her "set" did not exist ; or, if she had any, she would not own it.

On her return from Spain, her Grace created a rather lively sensation and temporary enthusiasm by her Spanish dresses, guitars, castanets, sketches, and tales of her equestrian feats in the peninsula. The sketches, at one time, had been much displayed, but were lately quite withdrawn from public gaze. Why ? *nous verrons*.

But she had her admirers, too. There was a family named Lauderdale, two young ladies of

which looked up to her Grace as a kind of tutelary saint, because the Duke insisted that some particular ambition of Sir Thomas should be granted by ministers.

On one occasion, at her Grace's house, Miss Euphemia Lauderdale went into such raptures of admiration when looking at a sketch by the Duchess of a "Cita" in Andalusian costume, that she attracted the attention of the whole party present.

"Oh, how nice!" exclaimed the young lady. "Oh, *do* look, mamma. Is it not beautiful? Really, her Grace should publish her sketches."

All pressed forward and looked at the miracle of art; and, if malicious report spoke truly, this absurd praise tempted the Duchess to drive off next day, at an early hour, to a stern painter —whose studio she entered *incog.* — and ask his opinion as to the merit of about a dozen of her Spanish drawings.

"Why," replied the artist, "they may be good

to some eyes ; but it is a pity the young sketcher has never learnt to *draw* ; it is also obvious that the *colouring* might have been omitted with advantage.”

This decided her Grace *not* to publish at present ; at least, not until she had got her friend, Brush, the poor Scotch painter of decided talent, as yet unrewarded, to touch them up for her. Accordingly, the sketches were not frequently seen, *à la négligée*, after the above criticism had been pronounced.

But the excitement attributable to the Duchess’s Spanish travels was very short-lived. It soon melted away ; and she remained, as formerly, only one solitary “ Grace,” without “ set,” tone, or content, among others of more celebrity.

She was a great prey to Boredom in all its intolerable varieties : at one time, by there being really no one in town worth running after : at another, by the good-natured Duke forcing country cousins upon her : now, at her

name having been omitted in the Court Circular, when recording a party at which, as the Nizam Tyho was to be present, her Grace had struggled hard to be included, though she knew not the giver of it: then, because her name was displayed at the head of Mrs. D.'s rout, where she had not been; to say nothing of other mortifications, "too numerous to be repeated."

But the climax of her woes was reached by the omission of her name in the list of the Duchess of Comforter, when the Nizam Tyho inspected that lady's picture-gallery; and the following week, on her being invited to the inspection, when not one of higher rank than herself was present, and, of celebrities, only two Americans.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNEXPECTED CHANCE FOR THE DUCHESS.

FORTUNE, at length, consented to smile on the Duchess of Ellingfield. On the morning following the “picture-gallery inspection” at the Duchess of Comforter’s — the horridly boring party of that stiff-necked, old, painted vixen, as *our* Duchess designated it — the latter was sitting in anything but a sweet or serene temper, when she stumbled, at a twisting corner, on the very excitement for which she ardently longed.

She was deliberating with herself as to what new manœuvre she could put into operation, with a view of attaining celebrity in the world of fashion, when the door was opened, and a Mercury announced his Grace.

After delivering a few preliminary compliments, in which the Duke was very profuse, but which his wife always received with manifest impatience, he informed her that chance that morning had led to a most extraordinary *rencontre*—quite an adventure for so steady an old man as himself.

Commencing, as was usual with the Duke, in a rather prosaic manner, his wife demonstrated so much impatience that, had his eye-sight been clearer, it must have been disagreeably perceptible even to him.

“I was just turning the corner near King Street, after having left my club,” continued the Duke, “when——”

“You have told me that already three times,

Duke, and my memory is not bad," interrupted the lady. "But pray proceed."

"*Pazienza!* my love," retorted he. "You really are too impatient, and this puts me out. Let me see. Where was I? Oh, I have it. I was saying that I had only left my club about five minutes, when——"

Here an almost inaudible "Psha!" was uttered by the listener.

"When," pursued his Grace, "coming to the corner of King Street, as I think I before mentioned, who should I see, but our friend turning off into some street near Duke Street, not far——"

"What friend, for heaven's sake?" impatiently demanded the Duchess, as she remembered Lord Sidney Tresham and the other gentleman with whom she had spoken at the Woolwich Review.

"What friend?" echoed his Grace. "Where was I, by-the-bye?"

It must here be remarked, that the Duke, who very seldom intruded on his wife's mornings, and then only with a specific object, was in the habit, totally uninfluenced by her lively little sallies, of giving the fullest detail to his communications, preserving, for conscience sake, every particular, however minute. Consequently, her Grace's interruptions, which she found it impossible to restrain, only protracted discourses that she wished were finished almost before they commenced. Yet the Duke, old as he was, had few of the infirmities of senility. With men, he was manly, and spoke at once to the purpose. In the society of his wife he became diffuse of speech, in order, perhaps, to prolong the pleasure of conversation: it was a kind of word-dalliance with one whose looks and voice allured him.

“Where was I?” reiterated he. “Oh, I was about to observe that our meeting occurred near the little street opposite the French plays. You know the spot, don’t you?”

She replied not for some minutes ; but, as he waited deliberately, she was forced to say, “ Of course I do.”

“ Well,” resumed he, “ just opposite the French plays, who should I see but our friend, Harry Greville.”

“ Oh, that horrid bore ! ” exclaimed the Duchess.

“ So,” continued the Duke, “ I hurried on quite unfashionably to meet poor Harry ; and coming up to him quite breathless, I exclaimed, ‘ My dear fellow—— ’ ”

“ Really, Duke,” interposed the Duchess, “ if you have come here merely to entertain me with narratives of *rencontres* with stupid boys in the streets, I think, as I have an engagement, it may not be deemed unreasonable if I ask your permission to retire.”

But the Duke remorselessly persisted in his recital.

“ ‘ My dear fellow,’ said, I, ‘ it is an age

since I have seen you. How changed you are! But, dear Mary, to make a long story short, I took Greville's arm, and, after a good chat, I asked him to spend the autumn with us at Safie Castle; and, though at first he did not seem very anxious to acquiesce, he finally accepted the invitation, for I pressed him very hard, as I always make a point," added the Duke, emphatically, "of being as civil as I can to your relations."

The Duchess bit her lips, and had very nearly given expression to a not over-complimentary burst, when these last words changed the current of her thoughts, which, however, would not have been flattering to her kindred had they known what passed through her Grace's mind. She therefore, most prudently, was silent.

"As Harry Greville has accepted my invitation," continued his Grace, "I wish you to extend your list, and ask a few friends of his to be of the party."

The lady, who had commenced by being simply bored, was now vexed. “Friends of Greville!” ruminated she. “Who on earth can *they* be? But I suppose I must consent.”

So, at last, she carelessly said, though not without a latent hope that her husband would agree in the nomination, “Well, I suppose, then, I must invite Sidney Tresham and Captain Sl——”

She had not time to finish the last name before the colour forsook her face, and she seemed covered with confusion. She was not often so unguarded, or prone to self-betrayal.

A change came suddenly upon the Duke’s countenance. His playful looks vanished: his brows were knit—his lips were compressed—and from his eyes darted reproachful glances. The frown soon gave way to a strange smile either of pity or of scorn. A painful silence ensued.

“He is angry,” mused she. “Can he have

heard anything injurious to my honour? If so, who can be the tale-bearer? Is it possible that my indiscretions with these two men can have reached his ears? O, how I execrate the empty pride of conquest which tempted me to flirt with persons so notorious in the annals of gallantry! I have been led into my present danger of offending the Duke, by self-conceit, love of flattery, and craving for admiration. I have, unhappily, forgotten the admonition of Lady Wortley Montague:

‘In part, she is to blame that has been tried—
He comes too near that comes to be denied.’

My husband’s looks are ominous, and he does not speak. I long to know, and yet dread to hear, if he is aware of my foolish, flighty conduct.”

The Duke was the first to disturb the stillness.

“Mary,” said he, “I thought it impossible that it would ever be necessary on my part to

give you a caution on such a subject as the present. But I find it incumbent on me to request—nay, to *command*—that the names of Lord Sidney Tresham and his companion—that other profligate, the mere allusion to whom caused you suddenly to pause,—never again shall be uttered between us.”

These concluding words were enunciated sharply and sternly. The colour rushed back to the Duchess’s face as painfully and quickly as it had previously retired. She looked ashamed—yes, ashamed.

“No,” resumed his Grace, in a placable tone, “my thoughts of invitation did not extend to young men. They were monopolised by some very interesting foreign ladies.”

The Duchess, feeling greatly relieved, now listened with no little interest.

“In the course of our conversation,” pursued his Grace, “Greville mentioned that the young Marchesa di Salvatierra and her sister Ursula

are in London. When you see Harry, he will relate to you the object of their journey, which I myself have not time to do ; neither would my politeness permit me to detain your Grace from the engagement to which you alluded just now. So I have only to add, that I wish you to visit these ladies, and, if possible, receive a visit from them before we leave town, and also after our arrival at Safie Castle."

The Duchess was now as much interested as previously she had been bored. She would fain have learned the reason which caused the young Marcheza and her sister to visit England. A thousand questions would she have asked had she hoped to elicit replies. But as she knew that the Duke was not likely to extend the information he had originally determined to impart, she contented herself with noting the address of the Spanish ladies. Then, expressing a cheerful acquiescence in her husband's request, she courteously, and almost humbly,

returned his *preux* salutation, as he took his departure from her boudoir.

In the high roads of life, her Grace, this year, had encountered only impediments. But at the winding corner of Boredom, she stumbled on an excitement which her brightest hope had not ventured to picture at the commencement of the present mortifying season.

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. GELLSCRUST IN LONDON — INTERVIEW
BETWEEN HER AND MR. GREVILLE.

THAT which, in this life, sometimes appears, at first sight, very unimportant, may ultimately prove to be a momentous turn of our career: it may be the hand of Fate, either stretched out to save, or withdrawn to ruin, us.

The meeting of Greville and Tresham had a material effect on the destiny of the former.

Not that anything of great interest passed

between the two acquaintances, so as to induce either of them to adopt sudden and important designs. But the fact of Lord Sidney being in London, and often in Greville's locality, determined the latter to avoid it as quickly as possible.

As far as conversation was concerned, the meeting might, or might not, have influenced Greville's feelings ; but decidedly it would not have hurried his movements, had not a more powerful impulse arisen.

Tresham had expressed surprise at the meeting, and indulged in a few light, sarcastic remarks, though he could not repress a feeling of jealousy in contemplating the decided superiority with which Greville turned off the sneering vein of his first salutation. Tresham was not prepared for the dignified loftiness of manner evidenced by his companion, who gave him no information as to his plans, and avoided all direct allusions to his place of abode in a man-

ner that was at once wary, yet well-bred ; and Greville clearly perceived that his reserve irritated Tresham.

Moreover, it was Greville who shortened the interview by abruptly saying it was time to return to London, and that he had business to transact in Woolwich previously. But, in spite of his apparent unconcern, the having seen Tresham forced him into immediate action in a matter which, otherwise, would have been delayed.

In the somewhat peculiar fact of Mrs. Leicester being an inmate of his residence, and an object of his charity, Greville dreaded the interpretations which a man like Lord Sidney would not fail to put upon such a connection. Besides this, he had a personal distaste to meeting an individual with whose pursuits he could in no respect sympathise, and to whom he apprehended a kind of explanation would some day be due.

He therefore determined to expedite, as much as possible, the business which had first brought him to London, and endeavour to avoid all further implication in the painful affair in which his kindness of feeling had involved him, by quitting town as soon as possible.

His generous heart, however, revolted at the idea of leaving Clara in the forlorn state in which he had found her; and he dreaded the consequences that might ensue from a necessity to return with her poor infant to a squalid and hunger-haunted room in a vile house and viler neighbourhood.

But Greville felt that his position was a difficult and delicate one; and, on mature reflection, he resolved to apply to Clara's nearest relatives, beseeching them to afford the pecuniary relief so awfully required by her, as well as to fix upon some plan for her future. In this, it was unquestionably their duty to acquiesce.

Luckily, Greville's difficulties were, to a con-

siderable extent, removed by the arrival of an unexpected assistant.

He was sitting in his room writing, and apparently engaged in a not over-pleasing task, when the servant entered to announce a visitor—a lady—who had called to see Mrs. Leicester; the servant, however, had refused to usher the lady up-stairs, as the most positive orders had been given that Mrs. Leicester would see no one. The girl feared to take up a card which the stranger requested might be instantly presented to Mrs. Leicester, and therefore she had brought it in to him, thinking that some answer might be given to the old lady, which would, perhaps, satisfy her, as she appeared to be sadly moved.

Greville read the name of Mrs. Gellscrust on the card—a name strange to him. However, he desired the lady might be shown up, as he should be able to afford some intelligence relative to Mrs. Leicester.

Mrs. Gellscrust soon entered Greville's apartment ; and though he saw at once that she neither wished to assume the station of a lady, nor to be thought one, her appearance was so respectable that he instantly rose to receive her, and requested her to be seated.

The information Mrs. Gellscrust wished for was speedily afforded ; and Greville was glad indeed to behold the satisfaction he caused the good creature by assuring her that the object of her search was in the house.

Greville was about to ring the bell, and request the servant to take the card to Mrs. Leicester, when a thought flashed across his mind that the authority he seemed to have over Clara might perhaps be unfavourably interpreted. He therefore, in a hurried manner, said to the stranger—

“ Pray, madam, have you any previous acquaintance with Mrs. Leicester, or is this to be your introduction to her ? ”

“Oh, Lord, sir !” replied Mrs. Gellscrust, “I have known Clara Leicester from her birth. I nursed her, sir. There is no necessity for form between my dear lady and me. Not any, I assure you, sir.”

“This is really most fortunate,” rejoined Greville; “I feel very happy to make your acquaintance. Might I request you to remain here a little time while I say a few words before you see Mrs. Leicester ?”

The old housekeeper resumed her seat, and Greville glanced at her card.

“You, then, are Mrs. Gellscrust, Mrs. Leicester’s nurse ?” interrogated he.

“Yes, sir,” responded she; “why do you ask ?”

“Because,” answered Greville, “I think I have already heard your name. I am Captain Greville. I feared you might think it strange to find Mrs. Leicester here, without some explanation, so I wished to tell you I am a relative of that lady.”

“ Greville !” ejaculated the old housekeeper ; “ why, to be sure, the Grevilles are related to the Delaunays. My Lady’s cousin-german is married to a Greville ; and if I remember rightly, I have seen her. Might she have been your mother, sir ?”

“ You are correct, Mrs. Gellscrust,” replied Greville ; “ my mother was Lady Delaunay’s first cousin. But what I wished to tell you is—considering your intimate knowledge of Mrs. Leicester — that you might, perhaps, be startled to see her as she now appears, unless you are in some degree prepared.”

“ Oh, God ! is she ill, sir ?” gasped the old woman ; “ tell me, for heaven’s sake !—Is she ill, sir ?”

The good creature’s anxiety was so sincere, and the interest she manifested was so evident in the earnest manner of her appeal, that Greville was much affected. Hastening to settle

her mind on the point which had alarmed her, he said very kindly—

“ Oh, no, my good lady, Mrs. Leicester is not ill; but I find some difficulty in explaining my meaning. Her own family is not aware of the circumstances in which Mrs. Leicester is at present placed. I suppose even her husband does not know she has returned from Spain.”

He paused; but observing his visitor’s placid demeanour—for Mrs. Gellscrust, having ascertained that her fear, as regarded Clara’s health, was unfounded, regained her usual serene composure.

“ If the truth must be told,” continued Greville, “ there appears to have been some family misunderstandings, and these have hindered certain expected remittances. Mrs. Leicester has, therefore, been in somewhat distressed circumstances.”

Greville was anxious to explain clearly the cause of Clara being in the house with him, and

his acute sense of propriety demonstrated how delicate and difficult a task he had undertaken.

“But,” pursued he, “your name has suggested to me that perhaps you come on the part of Mrs. Leicester’s family.”

“No, sir,” replied Mrs. Gellscrust, “I am here by her own desire.”

“I thought,” resumed Greville, “the family might have heard—indeed, she herself told me—that she had been forced to apply to some friend for pecuniary assistance ; and I perfectly remember your name as being that of the person who granted the loan. I presume, therefore, that either her sister or her father, knowing you had been in communication with her, have sent you on the present occasion.”

“I beg your pardon, sir,” observed the old housekeeper, “no one has known of that transaction through me. As I before told you Mrs. Leicester herself desired my presence here, to which effect I received a letter from her.”

“ Oh, do not think I wish in any way to pry into family affairs,” said Greville, hurriedly, and conscious of having wounded the feelings of his visitor. “ My duty is a very unpleasant one. In short, I am compelled to acquaint you that I discovered Mrs. Leicester in a sadly impoverished condition, living in a lodging wretchedly unsuited to her station in life. As the place, moreover, was in a bad neighbourhood, I offered her some rooms here, where she would have most respectable female society, and she kindly accepted my invitation. I thought it prudent to give you some warning previously to your seeing Mrs. Leicester, so as to prevent the surprise you would otherwise feel at the fatality which has reduced her to her present condition.”

Having ended his communication, Greville rang the bell; then wishing good morning to Mrs. Gellscrust, and saying the servant would take her up to Mrs. Leicester, he left the room.

His excitement was greater than his manner

had demonstrated before the old nurse. A flush was in his face, and a quiver on his lip, when he thought of the melancholy scene which must soon occur between the fond and devoted adherent of the Delaunay family, and the poor unfortunate victim of Tresham's perfidy.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE INTERVIEW—A SURPRISE.

IT was with a palpitating heart that Mrs. Gellscrust ascended the stairs to Clara's room. What Mr. Greville had communicated as to the sufferings of Mrs. Leicester, so bewildered the good woman, that when the door was opened by the girl who preceded her, she paused as if afraid to enter.

It will be remembered that, when on the point of sending Mrs. Gellscrust's card to

Clara, Greville hesitated, because he wished, before the interview should take place, to acquaint his visitor with a few particulars concerning the present state of her former mistress, and had forgotten to resume his intention of forwarding the name. Consequently, Mrs. Leicester was not prepared for the coming of her old nurse on that day.

Mrs. Gellscrust having recovered from her first trepidation (consequent on what she had heard from Mr. Greville), mustered resolution to pass inside the door, where she stood a moment before she was observed by Clara, who, on seeing, and not at first recognizing, her, gazed with surprise at the unwonted appearance.

“Who,” thought she, “can be that woman in the door-way of my room, standing with fixed looks at me, but silent as a statue?”

She was about to question the servant-girl, when the hand of the stranger was slowly held

out, and a smile—a sad smile—passed over her visage.

Clara instantly knew her humble friend. Then, exclaiming,—

“Martha! dear Martha! is that you?” she rushed forward and folded the faithful creature in her arms.

“I scarcely expected you so soon,” continued Clara, after the first loving caress had passed. “How kind and prompt you are! And at your age, too. Sit, my ever-valued, ever-beloved friend. My heart leaps with joy at your presence, for indeed, indeed, I want advice and consolation.”

“Dearest lady,” ejaculated Mrs. Gellscrust, “command me in any and every way. To serve you is the great object of my few remaining years. Some of your late trials have been slightly mentioned to me by Mr. Greville. You have been cruelly neglected. Those who should have succoured you, have, I hear, meanly

stood aloof. I will not allude to Mr. Leicester, for surely you must have had some mortal quarrel with him, and I never thought he was a fitting husband for you. But the Duchess ! Why did not her Grace come forward and stand between you and harm?"

"Martha," responded Clara, in an almost solemn tone, "your kind feelings cannot apprehend the hardening effect of worldly pomp and ambition. Mary is too much absorbed in toilsome efforts for fashionable distinction, to waste one thought on her unhappy sister."

Mrs. Gellscrust was about to reply, when Clara abruptly stopped her, saying, "Ask me no questions, Martha, just at present. I am not yet composed enough to answer them. You shall know all in time."

The old nurse took Clara's hand, kissed it, and remained silent. But though she strove hard to subdue her emotions, she could not so

far succeed as to prevent tears from trickling over her aged face.

Clara, too, was deeply affected.

When the latter had in a slight degree conquered her mental agony, she said,—

“O Martha, let me not confine my memory to the pain I have endured from the heartlessness of others, but recollect also my inestimable cousin, Lady Grace Dalzell, who, like a saint from heaven, soothed my sufferings by sweet and delicate sympathy, and alleviated my destitution by liberal gifts of money. But, wretch that I am! I returned evil for good, and met her kindness by treachery.”

Martha was amazed at these words. “Surely,” thought she, “they involve some fearful mystery. Though what it is, I cannot even guess.”

Clara, after a time, resumed her discourse.

“Had I not,” said she, “accidentally met my relation, Mr. Greville, who, in pity of my abject state, brought me to this respectable abode,

where I have been blessed by the society of worthy and well-educated women, I know not if I should now be alive."

There was another embarrassing silence.

"What I have said, my dear friend," resumed Clara, "must sound to you like a dreary enigma which you are utterly unable to solve. Soon, however, I will make all clear. Meanwhile, Martha, as I have in part recounted some of my miseries, you are at liberty to question me further; for I believe you will not seek, by any stern inquiry which might imply a rebuke, to make my wounds bleed anew. Kiss me, Martha."

The good woman threw her arms round the neck of her lady, and, unable to check the sobs which convulsed her, pressed her lips to Clara's face and forehead with the eager tenderness of a parent. The love of a whole life was concentrated in that kiss.

Some of those who may perhaps read the

present volumes, will have observed that life presents few instances of devotion by one individual to another, more touching, more constant, more disinterested, more holy, than is often manifested by a class of women whom we flippantly term "old maids." Divers reasons might be assigned for this, were it not ungracious to analyse what is, in itself, so honourable to our nature, or, like a severe casuist, try, with more envy than philosophy, to assign motives by which such unfailing affection may be prompted, and thus endeavour to lessen its merit. All honour, therefore, to the present antiquated spinster.

"Oh, my dear child," gasped she, as soon as she could recover the power of utterance; "why, in your distress, whatever it might be, did you not appeal to Lady Delaunay — the parent who loves you with all her heart and soul — yea, even as I myself love you?"

Clara was overcome, and wept aloud.

“ You forget, Martha,” answered she, “ that my dear mother is not without sharp trials and griefs of her own. Then, her life is still, as it has always been, devoted to religion. I should wither and sink under her rebuke.”

“ I cannot even guess, my dear, to what you allude,” rejoined Mrs. Gellscrust; “ but undoubtedly your fears, be they what they may, must in any case be vain. It is one of the most blessed offices of religion to teach charity. Who, among us, could endure an unsparing examination? The Founder of our faith is called ‘ The Saviour,’ not ‘ The Avenger;’ and Christianity inculcates forbearance and mercy in judging human actions. Nothing is more prominent than this in the life of the Divine Author of our religion. How benignly was His loving kindness shown towards the woman taken in adultery.”

Clara trembled and turned pale. Mrs. Gellscrust made the allusion without the remotest

suspicion that it could possibly affect *her* individually. But, seeing that she had disturbed Mrs. Leicester, the good nurse changed the subject.

“ Well, my dear,” said she, “ as you have some reluctance to apply to Lady Delaunay, will you for a time, or as long as I live, if you are so minded, share with me my humble cottage at Dalesbrook ? The neighbourhood is rural, hushed, and abundant in features of beauty—hill, vale, and wood. My means are sufficient for both of us, and I have a good and attentive girl for my servant. We can walk in shady lanes and muse on the bounties of nature. Our evenings can be spent in cosy chat ; and as you know I was always fond of reading, you will find on the shelves in my sitting-room more books than the greater number of cottages can present.”

Here was a picture for the contemplation of poor, unhappy, heart-wrecked Clara. She, who

had been buffeted and tossed by the fierce tempests of the world ! The danger and terror to which she had long been exposed, now appeared tired of pursuing her, and a haven seemed at last within her reach. Tranquillity, seclusion, woody solitudes, a sequestered cottage, books, and a loving friend, were offered as blessed substitutes for dangerous turbulence, corrupt air, perpetually-recurring fear of starvation, and the unfailing hostility of low people, with whom she was forced into contact.

Clara mused awhile over this contrast. Her soul languished for the repose of a rustic retreat, and she listened with charmed ears to Mrs. Gellsrust, as the good woman expatiated on the calm pleasures she offered to one whom she loved and respected with all her heart.

Nurse was quite garrulous on her theme, leaving nothing untouched which she conceived might be attractive to one so precious to her as Clara.

“Then, my dearest lady,” pursued she, after having dwelt on many of the advantages of her proposal, “we shall have pleasant neighbours who will visit us, and whom we shall visit. The farmers in our vicinity are, for the most part, well-informed persons, and their dames are unaffected and friendly. Our winters especially, are very social; for then we live in a perpetual interchange of hospitality, abridging the long evenings by a pleasant rubber of whist; while, as themes for our gossip, we have the London papers every week, so that, though out of the throng, we hear its distant murmurs, and know the incidents that happen in those whirling circles.”

As she heard this, Clara trembled and recoiled. She panted for solitude — absolute solitude; if indeed that might so be called which included the beloved companionship of Martha. Arcadia itself would cease to be the blissful place represented by the poets, were it to comprise

newspapers, card-playing and gossiping parties. Clara desired, if possible, to be hidden for ever from the world.

“ My dear Martha,” said she to nurse, “ in your receipt for happiness, you crowd too many ingredients. What I need, are merely seclusion and concealment. Were it possible—which it is not—I could wish to be seen by no other eyes than yours and those of your young servant. But what right have I to condemn you to solitude? to sever you from your neighbours and friends? No; my burdening your happy home is out of the question. I must myself bear the infliction cast upon me, and not suffer another to partake my wretchedness.”

“ Do not talk so,” replied Martha. “ What you say only increases my anxiety to have you with me. Confide, I implore you, in me and in my love. I cannot, my dear, dear lady, leave you thus, and I will not. For heaven’s sake,

come home with me, and quit for ever this horrid Babel—this London.”

“ You tempt me powerfully, beloved Martha,” said Clara. “ Your tranquil cottage and its books are charming ; and so are the balmy air, the shady lanes, hills, vales, and woods. But the visiting and the visitors, and, worse than all, the newspapers, repel me. These latter—necessary and beneficial as their reports are—must poison the sweetness of your retreat with narratives of London vice in high places, and misery and London guilt in low. Did you, Martha, ever chance to read in the papers any allusion to *me* ?” added she, with a searching glancing at nurse.

“ To *you*, my dear lady ?” returned Martha, in a tone of surprise. “ No, surely. How should I ?”

Clara, so far, was satisfied.

“ I have lived, dear Martha,” pursued she, “ in the worst and most crime-haunted localities

of this monster town, and my soul yearns for deliverance from it."

"Come, then, with me this very afternoon to the country," exclaimed Mrs. Gellscrust; "or," continued she, "if you would prefer a neighbourhood where we may be thoroughly secure from the intrusion of visitors, there are, I am told, in the suburbs of London an abundant choice of pleasant cottages, where persons fond of retirement may live in perfect seclusion. In one of these retreats we may establish ourselves with more privacy than in the village where I now reside. What do you say, my dear lady? To me, the change will be agreeable."

Clara could not fail to recognize the kind solicitude, delicacy, and unselfishness manifested by Martha in this proposal. The scheme was most agreeable and soothing to Clara's harassed spirits. She knew that, in the immediate vicinity of our metropolis, a recluse may be more free from prying eyes than elsewhere. His

neighbours are too busy to concern themselves with him : as long as he “pays his way,” not a question is asked. An inexpensive cottage may be found in fifty different localities round London, all healthful and possessing even the charm of rural quiet, old trees, and green meadows. Clara, when the proposal was first made, was irresistibly attracted by it. But further consideration checked her delight.

“ I fear, dear Martha,” observed she, “ that such a blessing is not practicable. I am penniless, and must not be a drag on your small means. Besides,” added she, with a heavy sigh, “ you do not yet know all. When all shall be revealed, you will not wonder that I should desire to be hidden from the prying eyes of strangers.”

Martha could respond to these portentous words no otherwise than by a look of utter bewilderment.

“ It is impossible,” thought Clara, as she

glanced at the expression in Mrs. Gellsrust's face, "that I can seriously, for a single instant, even *discuss* Martha's proposal without first making an important and awful communication to her—one which might, perhaps, change her loving zeal to abhorrence. The risk must, however, be undergone. I must summon my utmost powers of daring, for they will be needed in the harrowing experiment I am bound to venture on."

Then, with desperation, facing the extremity, she said,—

"Martha, shall I tax your patience too far, if I ask you to step with me for a few minutes into my sleeping-room?"

"No," returned Mrs. Gellsrust ; "why should it?"

The two friends left the sitting-room together, Clara leading the way. Martha, as she followed, said mentally, "I wonder what mystery is now about to be unfolded? What could she

mean about allusions to herself in the newspapers?"

Clara's own chamber was now entered. The bed's head stood parallel with the door, leaving a space on the other side between it and the partition. Having closed the door, Clara sat down and motioned Mrs. Gellscrust to a seat. A silence of some minutes' duration ensued, during which, Clara seemed to be concentrating her energies. Then, with a sudden effort, she arose, and, beckoning Martha, passed to the farther side of the bed.

"See there!" exclaimed she.

Mrs. Gellscrust advanced, and beheld a child's cot with a sleeping infant in it. Gazing down on the baby, and then placing her arm beneath it with all the fondness of a mother, "Oh," ejaculated she, "what a hard-hearted man must Mr. Leicester be to desert his wife and child in this cruel manner."

"Hush!" gasped Clara. "That is *not* Mr

Leicester's child. "Martha, Martha," continued she, in frantic accents, "I am a divorced woman! Do not spurn me, Martha, I beseech you. That infant is Lord Sidney Tresham's!"

The moment Martha heard the name of this profligate, and learned that he had for ever destroyed the character of her beloved one, she withdrew her arm by an unconscious impulse from beneath the baby, as if it had been a reptile, and gazed earnestly at its unhappy mother with a profound expression of sorrow mingled with looks of enduring love, but not having even a transitory sign of anger.

"Yes," pursued Clara, "Lord Sidney Tresham, who deluded me with promises pledged only to be broken; and then, after my divorce, refused to marry me."

Martha, though she had removed her arm from contact with the child, on hearing the name of its father, did not take her chair from the

side of the cot, but remained there with her wrist supported on the edge of the frame-work. The baby, who was now awake, and had been pleased with the first caresses of Mrs. Gells-crust, lifted its little hand, and grasped one of Martha's fingers.

This action, trivial as it was, utterly subdued the good woman. A change came over her feelings. The fountain of her tears was unsealed, and drops fell thick and fast. She raised the infant from its nest—pressed it to her bosom—and wept over it. With one of its little, soft hands, the child brushed off, as if in play, the tears that kept falling on its face, while it twined the fingers of the other in the white hair of her who fondly held it in her arms.

“ May God desert *me*, if ever I desert *thee*, poor, forsaken, friendless infant!” ejaculated Martha to herself, as she drew the baby nearer to her breast. But she spake not a syllable

aloud. Her heart was full, and utterance was denied her.

Clara, meanwhile, sat at a little distance, burying her face in both her hands. She dared not encounter the eyes even of the friend who, with unfailing love and devotion, had watched over her own infancy. Sobs were heard; still not a word was spoken.

Neither will *we* speak more; but leave the group to themselves in the silent room. Language would only profane the sanctity of that mighty sorrow.

CHAPTER XIX.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE—FIRST LOVE—CLARA'S
DEPARTURE FROM GREVILLE'S LODGINGS—
GREVILLE'S ILLNESS ABROAD.

UNDER the circumstances detailed in our foregoing chapter, it was not likely that Clara and her old nurse would separate on that night. Emotions had been called up from the heart's depth of both—tragic emotions ; and the influence of these forbade any parting between the sufferers — a word applicable not only to her whose conduct had wrought the misery, but also

to the humble friend who had heard Clara's melancholy confession.

Tired with its infantine play with old Martha, the child fell soundly asleep; but slumber was denied to the two friends, who talked the night away in framing plans as to their future residence, and as to pecuniary resources necessary to support a new location and increased expenditure.

“ My father, I think,” said Clara, “ will not refuse to aid me. He is not of a stern nature, and is already aware of my terrible misfortune. He must also know from some part of the family that Tresham has treacherously refused to marry me, and surely a father’s heart will not refuse to succour a betrayed and deserted daughter. Though his means are not large, I believe he would be able to spare a little for me. On my return from Spain with Lord Sidney Tresham, Sir George earnestly implored me to go home with him, and be the mistress of his house; but

various reasons forbade my acquiescence. First of all, I thought of my dear mother, who, estranged from her husband, without even the shadow of a fault, might be mortified by my usurping a place which formerly was hers. Then, my father's habits are not in harmony with mine; and, not to mention other considerations, I knew that an event ^{*} was approaching for which Sir George's house could not be a fitting scene."

And Clara glanced at the sleeping infant.

"I understand your motives," replied Martha; "and I respect them. Without dissuading you from making an application to Sir George, let me say that I have, by the accumulation of many years, saved money amounting to something not contemptible for a person in my station, besides the fifty pounds a-year generously allowed me by Lady Delaunay. These means will warrant us in taking a small and cheap house in the suburbs of this great city."

“ What ! ” ejaculated Clara, with an emotion which showed itself in tears, “ must the fruits of a long life of care, prudence, and self-denial be wasted on *me* ? It were better I should die than allow this. • No, Martha, you must not for my sake exhaust your hard savings.”

“ This view of the matter,” urged Martha, “ is wrong. I will admit that I stored every shilling I could spare as a fund for my own comfort in age. And do I not consult my own comfort by trying to alleviate your grief ? Should you deny me this privilege, my few remaining years will be years of wretchedness. If you are desperately careless as to yourself, bestow a thought, I implore you, on your unoffending infant, who must go whithersoever you go. My heart will break if you do not accept my offer.”

“ Good, kind, loving Martha ! ” ejaculated Clara. “ We will not separate. I must, however, try and obtain some allowance from my

father, and thus lessen the drag on you. He will grant me some little aid, depend on it."

"But whether he should do so or not," persisted Martha, "I wish it to be understood, my dearest, that I have sufficient for us both—yes, and for the child also."

Clara could answer this devotion only by tears. A silence of some duration ensued.

"I should be much happier than I am," said Clara, at length, "were it not for one consideration which preys like a vulture on my heart."

"By being shared, griefs are lessened," observed Martha. "Might I know what it is which thus torments you?"

"I will withhold nothing from you, Martha," replied Clara. "My conduct to my cousin, Lady Grace Dalzell, has borne the appearance of rank ingratitude. I dare not see her; and yet, if I could do so, I think, by explanation, I might mitigate my offence in her eyes."

“ Then, I would see her at all hazards,” rejoined Martha. “ But for some few weeks, you must not make the attempt.”

“ Why not ?” asked Clara, eagerly, darting a keen look at the face of her companion. “ Why not ?”

O Love, how indestructible art thou ! Should we desire to banish thee for cogent reasons, and think we have succeeded, thou wilt often return in all thy pride of strength when least expected, and when we flatter ourselves we have conquered thee. Any foolish thought or untenable conjecture, or unworthy suspicion touching a third party, will restore thy kingly sway, even shouldst thou re-appear in the disguise of Jealousy.

This truth was now felt by Clara. The ominous words of her companion seemed to indicate that Grace might probably be on the eve of marriage ; and some malicious Spirit whispered, “ Who but Tresham can be the bridegroom ?”

“ What else, indeed,” thought Clara, “ but a

wedding in immediate prospect could exclude me—now too much humbled to appear at so festive a time — from visiting my beloved cousin ?”

The suspicion was torture.

Alas ! Clara knew not that Grace was then secluded, not by nuptial preparations, but by constant attendance at the bed-side of her sick father, who had been indisposed some time, and, the day after the Woolwich review, was seized with alarming illness. Martha had been told this ; but poor Clara had lately lived, as it were, out of the world, where no rumours in connection with her own set would reach her.

“ Have you not heard,” asked Martha, in reply to Clara’s question, “ that the Earl of Clementsford is lying dangerously ill ?”

Clara started. “ No, indeed,” said she. “ Poor Grace ! I pity her. She loves her father with all her heart and soul. And *he* loves her ; for he

knows and appreciates her inestimable worth. Do they say there is no hope, Martha?"

"While there is life, there is hope," was the reply.

"My heart bleeds for Grace," ejaculated Clara; "but even had this melancholy state of things not existed, I could not have summoned resolution enough to visit my good, my adorable cousin."

Martha made no answer to this; but she resolved on her own course of action in reference to Clara and Lady Grace.

The next morning, Greville was anxious to learn the issue of the meeting between Clara and Mrs. Gellscrust. Such a torrent of conflicting thoughts, vain regrets, and idle repinings, had rushed upon him the preceding evening, on casually seeing Lady Grace at Woolwich, that he felt it necessary to reflect seriously as to his projects, before he sought for an interview with Mrs. Leicester.

It would be futile to affirm that the glimpse he had caught of Lady Grace had not its influence upon him, when he desired to terminate so abruptly his residence in London. Much as other considerations urged him to take this step, still this revival of what he imagined to be a quenched feeling had a powerful effect. Hence his present excitement.

The conduct of Lady Grace, when, some time ago, he had ventured to declare his passion for her, had been so truthful—and her manner of conveying a not agreeable refusal so extremely delicate, but withal so very decided and clear—that Greville, from the moment he received it, had abandoned all hope, and, as he imagined, all thought of his former dream. But, alas ! how very much he found his nerves shaken at the chance meeting at Woolwich ! And then, oh ! then, did he not vainly fancy that his former ideas might some day be realized ? Reason answered, Never ; but Hope still deluded ; and

Greville's delicate frame withstood feebly these conflicting emotions.

A still more confusing sensation pervaded him, when he remembered his visit to Spain, and how Ronda for ever flitted through his brain. The lovely, tranquil face, which he recalled so often, and which seemed to be his good genius, now floated before him and soothed and comforted him.

Strange was the effect. Why should he never think of the Marchesa Conscia di Salvatierra without experiencing this blissful calm, this peaceful rest of mind, yet, when he remembered the passing glimpse of Lady Grace, become so agitated that he could scarcely bear the excitement? Such is the enduring charm of first love—a mysterious enchantment which hovers over the young heart, prolongs its power in after-years, and ends only with life.

It was, therefore, to Greville an all-important necessity, by departing from town, to escape from

this sweet, but dangerous dominion ; and the only perplexing question was the leaving Mrs. Leicester in the squalid misery from which he had endeavoured to snatch her, and in which her family appeared to take no manner of concern.

He was greatly relieved, then, next day, to discover, from the interview he had with Clara, that Mrs. Gellscrust was a person in whom she could implicitly trust ; and that she did not delay a moment in coming to apprise him that she now felt, in possessing such a natural protector as her old nurse, that a longer residence in her present domicile would be embarrassing, whereas hitherto it had appeared quite in accordance with the purest friendship arising out of old family connection.

“ I did not, my dear Mr. Greville,” continued she, “ make any kind of excuse for accepting so promptly of your hospitality. I trust, therefore, you will guess that my present views do not

proceed from ingratitude. My appreciation of your kindness is, indeed, so heartfelt and deep, that I cannot find words to express my thanks. Now, however, that Mrs. Gellscrust has so providentially appeared, I cannot for a moment think of further trespassing upon the generosity of one whom I shall ever remember as among my best and most disinterested friends."

"Permit me to ask one question," said Greville. "Would it be prudent for you to leave this house with Mrs. Gellscrust, when your pecuniary affairs are in such a condition as you yourself informed me?"

"Oh! all that is changed since my old nurse arrived," replied Clara.

Greville did not push this matter, imagining that Mrs. Gellescrust had been, however indirectly, the medium which her nearest relations had selected to relieve her.

"Under all circumstances," observed he, "you can remain in these lodgings, and I can leave

them. It is always a difficult matter for a lady to select new."

Clara, while the colour mounted to her face, interrupted Greville by saying,

"Under no circumstances can I remain any longer here. It might be prejudicial to my dearest views. It might even retard my marriage, by causing some law-quibble, founded upon my imprudently having come here. But, believe me, I am sincerely grateful to you; and no person could reproach me with having taken a step which alone prevented one of two of the direst evils—imprisonment or starvation."

"I rejoice," said Greville, "to think that my humble endeavours should have been so far successful; and I cannot but appreciate the delicacy that prompts you to leave this abode. I confess I do not feel so much anxiety, now that I see you with such an evidently faithful companion as Mrs. Gellsrust; but pray remember, that

should you, upon any future occasion, require my services, I beg you will command them."

The colour came again rapidly to Clara's face as she made a few hurried remarks about his goodness. She then left the room.

Thus they parted.

Greville's mind was now made up to leave town as soon as possible, and proceed abroad to his regiment. His affairs were almost completely arranged.

He spoke to Mrs. Gellscrust as to the propriety of applying to Mrs. Leicester's family for relief, and not, under any consideration, to abstain from so doing from motives of delicacy.

At the same time, Greville reminded this faithful creature that he had, in no conceivable manner, any right to intrude his advice or offer suggestions as to Mrs. Leicester's future plans; nor could he have ventured upon doing as much as he had done, except to rescue her from the deplorable state in which he had found her.

In a very short time, Greville had made arrangements to leave town, and had taken his passage to Malta.

The interview at Woolwich was momentous in the extreme to Greville. Having proceeded abroad sooner than he originally intended, he arrived at the end of his voyage in a remarkably unhealthy season, when, indeed, it had been resolved by the authorities to send no fresh troops to the station. Soon after his arrival (for those who, from healthy climates, proceed to a place where epidemic is raging, are always more susceptible of disease than those living on the spot), Greville was taken ill, and in a very short time lay at death's door. The cholera had attacked him ; he was given over ; and no one expected his recovery.

Inscrutable indeed are the designs of Providence, which has numbered the very hairs of our heads, and which never sends illness or trials but to accomplish its own all-wise ends,—for

here, lying desperately ill, deprived of consciousness, attacked with the most fatal and pernicious of all diseases, Greville lingered on. And when the patient surmounts the fearful pains that usher in this dreadful malady, there is hope.

But it was a frightful spectacle to see one so lately in the enjoyment of perfect physical health, so prostrate, so far removed from his nearest and dearest friends, and keeping off all less interested companions from the fearful nature of his panic-bearing attack.

His greatest trial by far was that the consolations of religion were in a manner denied to him by the violence of the attack. He could think of nothing save the intense pain he was enduring.

Poor young man ! he suffered much ; but his life was spared, and his recovery was regarded as a miracle. The malady, however, left him in a deplorably weak state ; and even now there existed apprehensions as to his eventual fate,—

his convalescence was so slow, his debility so great.

As soon, however, as it could be effected without actual danger, it was judged indispensably necessary to remove him for change of air. The south of Spain or Madeira had been mentioned; and finally he selected Lisbon as the place to which he would wish to be sent.

He arrived at Lisbon, and in a short time recovered a tolerable degree of strength; when, alas! he was attacked by a violent fever. This determined him as to leaving the army. Fearing he might receive a mandate to this effect, he took the initiative, and wrote home, explaining fully his views. In due time, he received the concurrence of his friends on the meditated step; and his mother arrived in Lisbon, bearing the intelligence of his being no longer in the service.

Now guarded by the soft and tender care of the best of all friends, he rapidly got better; and

at length, as it was thought that a tour in the south of Spain might be of further benefit to him, he and his mother arrived successively at Cadiz, Seville, and Ronda.

Meanwhile his regiment had been ordered to the West Indies, which, under other circumstances, he must inevitably have accompanied ; and then what might have been his fate ? But now he is at Ronda ; and, as before said, the interview at Woolwich either entirely changed his destiny or riveted the last link of his future chain.

CHAPTER XX.

CONSCIA AND GREVILLE—A NARRATIVE.

CONSCIA and Greville met as old friends. The Salvatierra family received him with all the warmth and impulsive sincerity so characteristic of Spanish generosity. With all the freedom of southern manners did Greville and his fair Spanish friend roam about together.

Greville never contemplated for a moment what effect this friendship might produce on the heart of his female companion. He imagined himself proof against a tender feeling, and con-

sequently supposed that Conscia was influenced only by former good-will.

But Conscia ! oh, love, oh woman, what were her sentiments ? She felt all the power of love's intoxicating charm surrounding her, and she yielded, without a struggle, to it.

One evening at sun-down they were sitting at the end of the garden witnessing the glorious spectacle before them ; and Conscia had been prattling in her sweet broken English, which was irresistible coming from her lips.

“ I have often felt,” said she, “ that although I love my native country intensely, I should much like to visit your’s. England has ever possessed for me a mystic influence. I feel persuaded your women must be very beautiful.”

“ They are,” replied Greville, almost unthinkingly, as he still kept his eyes on the sun, now fast declining.

“ I have often thought I should like to have

been born in England," observed Conscia. "There is a grandeur, a chivalry about that nation that, even with all our Spanish poetry, I cannot believe equalled in any other country."

"And yet," replied Greville, "Napoleon called us a nation of shopkeepers."

Conscia was silent. Her fan dropped and remained on the ground.

Greville appeared so abstracted by the glorious sunset, that he perceived not this incident; but when the lovely young Spaniard stooped to raise her fan, the movement attracted his attention, and he took it up and gave it to her.

Their eyes met. It was as if a mutual fascination was in the glance.

They continued thus for some moments, until Conscia's face became suffused with a crimson blush; but Greville's countenance remained calm and composed.

In an instant it flashed through her vivid imagination that some indelicacy might be per-

ceived in her conduct—something incomprehensible, but assuredly not wrong. She was the first to break the silence.

“And yet,” observed she, “with all the nobleness of the English character, I am informed they are a cold, unloving race.”

Greville tried to smile, but it was a failure ; he remarked that the English concealed a depth of feeling under a reserved exterior ; and that at some time or other every one must feel the power of love.

Conscia endeavoured to smile also, and said,

“I do not think, for example, that you or Lord Sidney Tresham have ever yet loved.”

“I believe you are mistaken in both cases,” replied Greville. “I imagine Tresham has felt the tender passion.”

“And you, and you ?” demanded Conscia.

“I have.”

“Was it in England ?”

“It was.”

Conscia asked this question most artlessly ; yet it was with a trembling voice.

Greville observed it, and he saw that she appeared disappointed with his answer, and that she turned away her head.

Wishing to be gay, he said, laughingly,—

“ I will tell you, Senora, of my love—of my folly.”

“ Folly ?”

“ Yes, folly ; for I loved in vain.”

“ But,” pursued she, “ if your love was sincere, it was not folly—a pure and true love we consider holy.”

There was an earnest, kind reality in Conscia’s tones that assured Greville he was not conversing with a trifler, or one that could jest with a feeling such as his. He therefore replied,—

“ Senora, did not I fear to trouble you, I would recount to you the tale of my fruitless love.”

“ With pleasure will I listen ; but not now or here. The night air is cold, and you are yet far from strong. Come in.”

They proceeded into the house, where they found the library empty.

Greville almost abruptly commenced his narrative.

“ It is now,” said he, “ some few years past, that I was stationed near Dalzell Park in England, the owner of which had shown me much civility. He had one only daughter. I need not say she was beautiful, for her loveliness was eclipsed by more sterling qualities. After the first few interviews, her disposition so charmed me, that I seldom thought of her personal attractions, bewitching as they were.

“ I was very impetuous in those days. I reflected not, but fell violently in love with the richest heiress in England. Her kindness misled me : her condescension was mistaken for

another sentiment, so egregious was my vanity. We were much together.

“One day, in an unguarded moment, after a rapturous evening spent in her society, I wrote to her. In my letter I poured forth all my passion. It was a sincere, but boyish effusion. I told her I never could be happy without her. I spoke of nought save ourselves. I requested her, if she returned the love with which she had inspired me to meet me in one of the walks of the park. I named the day—the hour—I flew to the spot. She was not there! I waited two hours. I lingered on, hoping against hope, and praying she might come, but she did not appear.

“I returned home, and found a letter on the table. What my feelings were, I cannot describe. I broke the seal. My heart trembled so violently, that its throbs almost prevented my holding the paper. I glanced over the contents. A cursory view was sufficient to demonstrate

that my love was not returned. She would always esteem and value me as a friend ; but her love she could never give.

“ Oh, Senora, to me this letter was dreadful ; I had indulged in such vain hopes, such dreams of future joy, that I could not bear this sudden dis-illusion. I re-read the epistle. I saw there was no hope. The whole beauty of her character, her calmness, her steady principles, all convinced me she would never alter her determination.

“ But it was not then I perceived my own folly : it was not for months ; and then, only when I heard every one discussing her immense wealth, did the rashness of my act flash upon me, and I felt deeply mortified and ashamed. I never intended to see her again.”

“ And has your intention been carried out ?” asked Conscia.

“ No. I saw her once more, and, for a moment I indulged in my furious madness of

hoping. But it was not a tangible hope. It was only an excitement associated with other feelings which even now I cannot explain."

"And have you no hope now?" demanded Conscia, archly.

"Oh no!" He paused awhile; and then exclaimed, "but I am now quite cured."

"Of what?" demanded Conscia.

"Of my former love," replied Greville.

"Then have you found another?" asked the young Marchesa.

He paused ere he replied.

"No; but now I feel happy. Let me continue. I saw her once, and, as I told you, some mystic influence pervaded me, but it was not a feeling connected with the object I then perceived. I cannot, or could not, account for it. I was excited when I gazed at the former object of my passion, but calm when I thought of other scenes. I was so absent, that my staring was observed. An acquaintance came up to

me, and from what he said, I perceived he had remarked my abstraction, and, from a further conversation, I ascertained he was acquainted with more of my movements than I wanted him to know. Circumstances which I cannot enter into here, had compelled a lady, a relative of mine, to become an inmate of my house. He was aware of it: it was desirable that he should not have heard of it. This determined me to change my plans. I returned to London I took steps to change my residence—all turned out well.

“A few days afterwards I received a letter from the lady of whom I have been speaking, requesting me to visit her. I was extremely agitated, but I proceeded at once to her home.”

“It was in London. I could not fail to be struck with the evidences of wealth I perceived on my visit: the number of servants—the pictures—the general air that pervaded all, re-

minded me of the presumptuous folly of my having once dreamt to be the possessor of the mistress of it all. But her simplicity was as remarkable as the grandeur around.

“She received me most kindly, and soon placed me quite at ease. She even alluded to her first letter; but I felt calm now. She informed me the object of this interview was a serious one, and she requested my assistance to accomplish an end desirable for the whole family. I never saw her look more beautiful. As she spoke, there was a deep, earnest anxiety in her words. Her lovely violet eyes sparkled with intensity in the hope of bringing about a marriage with the man she herself had loved, but not with herself. She told me all; and as the lady was in my house, she had sent for me, to mention that such a fact was likely to create a serious obstacle to her earnest hopes. She wanted to hear from my own lips the cause of her being an inmate of my lodgings. She was

certain there was some good reason for my actions.

“ It was a delicate and difficult matter to explain all to her; but at last I succeeded in satisfying her completely. She thanked me warmly, and said everything would clear up now. She told me it was her only hope. She had been engaged to marry this man, and that must account to me for her never being able to return my feeling. It was now her determination never to marry. She trusted to possess me as a friend, for she had a great regard for me.

“ It was truly sublime to see her thus pleading the cause of a woman who had so deeply, but unconsciously, injured her.

“ The next day I left London.”

“ And will you not consent to tell me the name of this more than woman—this English angel?” asked Conscia.

Before Greville could reply, steps were heard

approaching, and Conscia's mother and sister soon entered, thus breaking off the conversation.

END OF VOL. II.



